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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES 1/

SUMMARY

The Present report has been prepared in accordance with Article 11 of the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (adopted by the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950, which provides, inter alia, that the "High Commissioner should report annually to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council". It gives an account of the main activities carried out for the benefit of refugees and displaced persons by the Office under the terms of the Statute and subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly. These include international protection, emergency relief and the achievement of durable solutions. The report also contains information on cooperation with other members of the United Nations system and with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The period covered by the report extends from 1 January 1996 to 31 March 1997, except for statistical, financial and programming data, most of which cover the calendar year 1996.

1/ This is a preliminary mimeographed edition of the report that will subsequently be issued in printed form as an official record of the General Assembly, fifty-second session.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The world's refugee population decreased from 14.5 million to 13.2 million in 1996. Similarly, the overall population of concern to UNHCR fell to some 26.1 million, of whom 3.3 million were repatriating refugees in the early stages of their re-integration, 4.7 million were internally displaced persons and 4.9 million were others of humanitarian concern, for the most part victims of conflict. Reflecting the increasing focus on voluntary repatriation as a solution for many of the world's refugees, over 1 million refugees returned to their country of origin in 1996.

2. No massive new refugee influxes were experienced in 1996 and the first quarter of 1997. Nevertheless, the conflict that engulfed eastern Zaire and the sudden and large-scale return of Rwandans from Zaire and the United Republic of Tanzania at the end of 1996 posed unprecedented challenges for UNHCR both in terms of providing humanitarian assistance in the midst of conflict and of supporting massive reintegration in a fragile post-conflict environment.

3. While confronting ongoing emergencies in many parts of the world, the Office also continued its efforts to promote and consolidate solutions to problems of displacement. In the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR began phasing out its emergency humanitarian programme and reoriented its efforts in support of the peace process, focusing particularly on the identification of solutions to the problem of refugees and displaced persons. Elsewhere, a milestone in terms of solutions was the conclusion of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA), which marked the final chapter of more than 20 years of international humanitarian efforts to resolve the aftermath of the conflict in Indo-China.

4. The numerous problems posed by humanitarian crises again highlighted the need to comprehensive approaches to the complex problems of displacement. A significant initiative in this respect was the convening of a regional conference to address the problem of refuges, displaced persons, other forms of involuntary displacement and returnees in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and relevant neighbouring States. The conference, which took place in May 1996, adopted a Programme of Action encompassing a comprehensive range of solution-oriented and preventive measures to address actual and potential problems of displacement in the region.

5. While encouraged by progress towards solutions in a number of regions, UNHCR remained deeply concerned about restrictive trends in the grant of asylum in many parts of the world. In its efforts to find solutions, UNHCR also continued to be confronted by a number of protection issues, notably the international protection aspects of return and reintegration, particularly in situations emerging from conflict.

6. During the reporting period, UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity continued to be developed and reinforced. An emphasis on contingency planning and new training initiatives, and the extension of these initiatives to include other United Nations and non-governmental

organizations, has enhanced UNHCR's ability to respond to refugee emergencies and coordinate its activities with other operational agencies.

7. The Office also continued to develop its institutional capacity to manage voluntary repatriation operations, ensuring that lessons were learnt from past reintegration operations. It also continued its efforts to build operational linkages with development organizations to ensure sustainable solutions for refugees in the aftermath of emergencies.

8. Efforts to integrate the needs and concerns of refugee women and children into protection and assistance programmes have derived additional impetus from the Beijing Platform of Action and the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. Ventures, such as the Bosnian Women's Initiative and a similar programme in Rwanda, have enhanced UNHCR's operational capacity to address these needs.

9. In 1996, UNHCR received a total of some $ 970 million in voluntary contributions towards its General and Special Programmes. By 31 March 1997, a total of $ 404 million had been received against General and Special Programmes requirements amounting to some $ 1.2 billion.

CHAPTER II

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

A. Introduction

10. The primary functions of UNHCR are to provide international protection to refugees and to seek permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments to facilitate their voluntary repatriation, or their assimilation within new national communities. The legal basis for these functions is provided by the Statute of the Office (General Assembly resolution 428 (V) annex of 14 December 1950) which defines the work of the High Commissioner as entirely non-political, humanitarian and social. The activities of the Office are further reinforced and guided by subsequent General Assembly resolutions, conclusions and decisions of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, and are carried out in a framework comprised of international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law, and internationally accepted standards for the treatment of refugees.

11. International protection means first of all securing respect for the basic rights of refugees, including admission to safety and non-refoulement, as well as ensuring that refugees are accorded favourable treatment in countries of asylum. It also means promoting ratification of the relevant international instruments with States and incorporation of these instruments into their national legislation.

12. The protection of refugees is, however, also inextricably linked to the search for and the attainment of durable solutions to the refugee problem. In this connection, the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee adopted as the topic of its annual theme the "Pursuit and Implementation of Durable Solutions". The adoption of this theme highlighted the emphasis given by the international community to voluntary repatriation as a durable solution and asserted that a natural extension of this emphasis is the increased importance attached to the prevention of forced displacement.

13. As part of its efforts to promote and consolidate voluntary repatriation and to prevent new displacement, UNHCR's activities in countries of origin have expanded very rapidly in the last few years. In addressing the problems of finding solutions and prevention, UNHCR continued to be confronted by a number of protection issues which warrant further consideration, notably the international protection aspects of return and reintegration, particularly in situations emerging from conflict. In addition, because UNHCR does not have an exclusive mandate or a monopoly of expertise in addressing the problems of prevention, improved coordination with other humanitarian, human rights and development organizations is becoming an increasingly important facet of UNHCR's operations.

14. There is growing awareness that lasting solutions to complex, refugee-producing emergencies require comprehensive approaches by the international community, which include addressing root causes, strengthening emergency preparedness and response, providing effective protection and achieving durable solutions. The Note on International Protection presented at the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee last year (EC/46/SC/CRP.37) highlighted the importance of protection based comprehensive approaches which

give a central focus to human rights. The Note highlighted such fundamental rights as the right to seek and enjoy asylum, the right to personal security and of non-discrimination as well as rights of refugees as embodied in international instruments on refugees. The responsibility of States to respect such rights was also emphasized in the Note. Following its consideration of the Note, the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee adopted a Conclusion on Comprehensive and Regional Approaches within a Protection Framework (A/AC.96/878 para. 22) which identified certain principal elements of protection based comprehensive approaches and encouraged States, in coordination and cooperation with each other, and with international organizations, if applicable, to consider the adoption of such approaches.

B. Securing the rights of refugees

15. The period under review, while witnessing a reduction in global refugee figures to an estimated 13.2 million, also saw an increase in the estimated number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The growing numbers of internally displaced persons reflects both the nature of more recent conflicts, and the growing obstacles to obtaining asylum. While thousands of asylum-seekers have been admitted and given refuge in many parts of the world, attitudes have hardened in others, resulting in a range of protection problems including refoulement at the border, establishment of institutional structures which severely restrict admission, restrictive application of the refugee criteria for individual asylum-seekers, and new legal measures in international fora to automatically exclude certain categories of asylum-seekers from refugee status.

16. UNHCR continued its role in meeting the protection and humanitarian needs of IDPs in such places as the North Caucasus region and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While UNHCR's general mandate does not extend to IDPs, its role in respect to internally displaced was reaffirmed by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session (Resolution A/RES/50/152). This resolution reconfirmed support for the High Commissioner's efforts in this regard on the basis of specific requests from the Secretary-General or the competent principal organs of the United Nations and with the consent of the State concerned.

17. In view of increasing concern that States world-wide are frequently resorting to detention of asylum-seekers and in order to clarify those international norms which relate to detention of asylum-seekers, UNHCR issued a set of guidelines which elaborated on what UNHCR regards as minimum standards for State practices in this regard.

18. During the period under review, UNHCR was engaged in informal consultations with a number of States on the subject of ensuring international protection to all who need it. Two meetings were held in Geneva, the first on 2-3 May 1996 and another on 17-18 December 1996. The first meeting sought to identify possible issues to develop further on this subject and agreed that temporary protection was one area which warranted further study. A UNHCR commissioned study on temporary protection was used as a basis for discussions at the second meeting. Further informal consultations are planned for 1997 and 1998.

19. UNHCR has also continued to play an active role in intergovernmental consultations aimed at harmonizing national laws and procedures, especially in Europe, and has sought to promote comprehensive regional approaches which combine the commitment to provide protection to those who require it, with clear policies for immigration and development assistance, and appropriate information strategies.

20. Another issue which was explored during the period under review relates to the return of persons not in need of international protection. In this regard, UNHCR prepared a Conference Room Paper (EC/46/SC/CRP.36) for consideration by the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. The paper examined the background to the problem, the definition of the term "persons not in need of international protection", the scope of the problem and highlighted States' responsibility in this area. UNHCR's limited role in this area was also emphasized.

21. Recognizing that serious violations of human rights are a cause of population movements, UNHCR has, with the encouragement of the Executive Committee and the United Nations General Assembly, sought to strengthen its cooperation with the human rights bodies of the United Nations. The aim of strengthening such cooperation is to promote effective responses to human rights problems which are generating, or threaten to generate, flows of refugees and displaced persons, or which impede voluntary return. The High Commissioner's statement to the fifty-second session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights drew attention to the central place which human rights have in the process of post-conflict peace building, highlighted the new initiatives engaged in by UNHCR in safeguarding the human rights of returnees and stressed the ultimate responsibility of States, with the support of the international community, to protect the human rights of their populations.

22. An important aspect of the work of UNHCR continued to be the monitoring of the safety of refugees who have chosen to repatriate. UNHCR has continued to promote, wherever possible, strategies which may contribute to stabilizing fragile situations and attenuating the underlying causes of refugee flows. This is seen most prominently in Bosnia and Herzegovina where UNHCR funded reconstruction and is involved in other areas of rehabilitation and reintegration. Inter-entity returns, especially to the Bosnian Serb entity, continue to pose protection challenges. In Rwanda and Burundi, UNHCR concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Nations Human Rights Field Operation in order to facilitate better collaboration in returnee monitoring and related areas. In this regard, the work of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda is of special interest to UNHCR.

23. The Rwandan refugee crisis continued to pose daunting protection challenges which called for creative strategies to afford effective protection to refugees in militarized camps, while at the same time identifying those who do not deserve international protection and effectively excluding them from the benefits of such protection. UNHCR has observed that the cooperation of the host Government is essential if this challenge is to be met. Another important lesson learned is the need for UNHCR to give sufficient priority to protection considerations in its formulation of overall policies and to ensure adequate field protection capacity at the early stages of an emergency.

24. In Central and Eastern Europe, the Office has stepped up its efforts to establish an active presence and has undertaken a variety of protection activities, including promoting accession to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, training, and providing advice on refugee legislation and status determination procedures. UNHCR has also given advice on constitutional, refugee and citizenship provisions, with advice on the latter to, inter alia, avoid the creation of stateless persons. UNHCR has also increased its collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) aiming to ensure that refugee issues were highlighted on its agenda.

25. Following the 1995 Executive Committee Conclusion on Statelessness (Conclusion No.77 (XLVI)), UNHCR actively promoted with Governments accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In this connection, UNHCR prepared and distributed an Information and Accession Package and also provided advice to some Governments on issues relating to citizenship and statelessness. During the course of 1996, Brazil and Guatemala acceded to the 1954 Convention, Bosnia and Herzegovina acceded to the 1961 Convention, and Azerbaijan acceded to both the 1954 and the 1961 Conventions. The protection of stateless persons and actions taken by States to reduce statelessness would contribute to preventing one possible cause of refugee flows.

26. In April 1996, UNHCR issued a Handbook on Voluntary Repatriation which sets out UNHCR's role in the various stages of the voluntary repatriation process and provides a practical guide to field staff, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government counterparts in various operational activities related to voluntary repatriation.

27. In continuation of its efforts to address the protection problems of refugee children, a Symposium on Unaccompanied Children was organized by UNHCR and attended by major European countries. The Symposium took place from 19-20 September 1996 and a broad range of issues relating to unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Europe were discussed. Following the Symposium, UNHCR finalized its Guidelines on Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, which were published and issued in February 1997. The Guidelines cover a range of issues relating to the protection of unaccompanied minors, emphasize the special needs of unaccompanied children in light of their vulnerability and advocate a comprehensive approach to their problem.

C. Promotion

28. South Africa and Kyrgyztan acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol during the reporting period, bringing the number of States party to one or both instruments to 132.

29. UNHCR's promotional activities sought to raise public awareness, strengthen knowledge and understanding of refugee issues, as well as to foster the effective implementation of international legal standards on behalf of refugees, returnees and other persons of concern to UNHCR, including through their incorporation into national legislation and administrative procedures. During the reporting period, UNHCR stepped up its

promotional efforts on a regional level. To this end, the Office participated in various seminars and conferences on refugee issues, organized refugee law and protection courses for government officials, implementing partners, academic institutions and NGOs in all regions of the world. The second part to a training module on Human Rights and Refugee Protection (Human Rights and Refugee Protection Part II: Specific Issues) was finalized and distributed. This training module provides a basis for the training of UNHCR staff members, implementing partners and government officials on the use of human rights standards in refugee protection.

30. UNHCR continued to monitor the work of the six treaty bodies and the Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities. During the reporting period, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued a resolution on the right of refugees who are members of minorities to return to their places of origin. UNHCR also provided information to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its pre-sessional meeting. Collaboration with the High Commissioner for Human Rights continued, in particular at the level of field operations, in order to enhance complementary action for the monitoring of human rights and for institution building. UNHCR also continued to maintain its contacts with human rights working groups, rapporteurs, experts and monitors, as an integral part of its approach to link human rights concerns with the protection of refugees.

31. UNHCR participated at the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the "Bangkok Principles" (Principles Concerning Treatment of Refugees) which were adopted by the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) in 1966. The event was hosted by the Government of the Philippines in Manila and was attended by a large number of member States of the AALCC. UNHCR assisted in facilitating the meeting and in the preparation of various substantive papers for discussions at the meeting.

CHAPTER III

ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

A. Major Trends in assistance

1. General and Special Programmes

32. UNHCR activities are divided into the two broad categories of General Programmes (including a Programme Reserve, the Voluntary Repatriation Fund and the Emergency Fund) and Special Programmes. Activities undertaken under both these programme categories are reviewed in a systematic manner by the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. At each of the four annual sessions of the Standing Committee, an update of developments in a given region is considered. This update covers overall developments in a region, as well as activities at the country level. In reviewing programmes at the country level, attention is given to the implementation of policy priorities established by the Executive Committee in the areas of refugee women, refugee children and the environment.

33. Obligations entered into during 1996 under General Programmes amounted to $ 423.5 million. With regard to Special Programmes (which include programmes under funding appeals by the United Nations Secretary-General), obligations in 1996 reached $ 720.5 million. Some 36.3 per cent of the Special Programmes pertained to UNHCR's Programme of Humanitarian Assistance in the former Yugoslavia and a further 33.4 per cent to the Great Lakes regional operation. Other important expenditures concerned the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA) and repatriation programmes in the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan. Thus, total voluntary funds obligations related to 1996 activities amounted to $ 1,144.0 million, with a total of $ 212.8 million available at year-end (not including the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund) as carry-over to meet initial programme expenditures in 1997. In addition, expenditures under the Regular Budget amounted to $ 25.3 million. Detailed information on expenditure levels for each country or area programme is given in Table 1.

34. The initial 1997 General Programmes target approved by the Executive Committee in October 1996 stands at $ 452.6 million, including $ 37.0 million as a Programme Reserve, $ 20 million for the Voluntary Repatriation Fund and $ 25 million for the Emergency Fund. Projections for 1997 under Special Programmes currently amount to $ 737.8 million, of which some $ 230.0 million pertain to the Great Lakes regional operation and some $ 235.9 million to the former Yugoslavia.

2. Types of assistance

(a) Emergency preparedness, response and assistance

35. In 1996 and the first quarter of 1997, UNHCR has actively participated in the follow-up to the ECOSOC resolution 1995/56 on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. At the same time, UNHCR has continued to develop its own emergency preparedness measures. This emergency response capacity was extensively tested in new and

continuing emergencies over the last year. The Great Lakes operation made unprecedented demands on UNHCR's resources, with population movements provoking one emergency following another throughout the year, culminating in the massive repatriation to Rwanda in the last two months of 1996, and the dispersal of several hundred thousand refugees within Zaire from the camps along Zaire's eastern border. There were other significant deployments of emergency staff and resources to Daghestan and Ingushetia, Iraq, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo.

36. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Section of UNHCR acts as the Office's focal point for both emergency preparedness and response. The Section consists of five Emergency Preparedness and Response Officers and six Emergency Administrative Officers. In responding to an emergency, the Section is complemented by UNHCR field staff drawn from a regularly updated Emergency Roster. This internal UNHCR standby roster of some 30 staff is backed-up by external standby arrangements with the Norwegian and Danish Refugee Councils, United Nations Volunteers and Radda Barnen. Specialist engineering staff are provided through an arrangement with the NGO Red R Australia and staff for rapid technical assistance in the health sector can be provided through the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (USA).

37. Emergency preparedness has been strengthened through an increased emphasis on contingency planning. Contingency Planning Guidelines were finalized in 1996. These have been distributed throughout UNHCR and have been widely shared with key United Nations partners, notably the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF, as well as with NGO partners. These guidelines have become part of the basis for an interagency approach to contingency planning. Staff from the Emergency Section successfully facilitated a collaborative contingency planning process in Angola, Eritrea, the Central Asian Republics, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

38. An important element in the enhanced emphasis on preparedness has been emergency training. Emergency Management Training Programme (EMTP) workshops were held in Ethiopia (for countries in the Horn and East Africa), Kyrgyzstan (for the Central Asian Republics) and Guinea (for West Africa). These training workshops are aimed at government staff, other United Nations agencies, NGOs as well as UNHCR. Two Workshops for Emergency Managers (WEM) were held in 1996. These workshops are aimed at the UNHCR staff who comprise the internal UNHCR Emergency Response Team roster.

39. An important new training initiative is the development of a training programme in emergencies for UNHCR staff in Headquarters. Refugee emergencies not only affect the field, but they also require an extraordinary response at Headquarters. In recognition of this, work has started on designing a course which will be implemented in 1997. Together with the EMTP and the WEM training courses, this Headquarters training will complete an emergency training programme which covers all the key actors in an emergency response.

40. In 1996, total expenditure on emergency assistance amounted to $ 77.6 million, of which $ 22.0 million were under General Programmes and $ 55.6 million under Special Programmes.

(b) Care and maintenance

41. After the emergency phase of a refugee operation, the basic needs of a refugee population are covered by activities described as care and maintenance until such time as a durable solution is possible. During 1996, well over half of UNHCR General Programmes expenditures were in the form of care and maintenance assistance. This amounted to some $ 243.2 million, with an additional $ 400.0 million expended for care and maintenance assistance under Special Programmes.

42. In Africa, where the greatest percentage of care and maintenance programmes are implemented, sizeable programmes continued in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, the Great Lakes region, Guinea, Kenya and Sudan.

43. Elsewhere in the world, care and maintenance assistance continued to be provided in South-East Asia to the remaining Vietnamese populations in the South-East Asian camps and Hong Kong, pending their repatriation or resettlement. In addition, major care and maintenance programmes were carried out in Algeria, the Central Asian Republics, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Pakistan during 1996.

(c) Local settlement

44. Assistance for local settlement, where possible, takes the form of projects aimed at promoting the socio-economic self-reliance and local integration of refugees in asylum countries, thus enabling UNHCR to phase out its care and maintenance on a gradual basis. As a durable solution to refugee problems, local settlement schemes in countries of asylum have encountered increased constraints, such as limitations in issuing work permits and scarcity of agricultural land, to name only two. In addition, xenophobia and severe unemployment in some host countries have added to the problems refugees face when attempting to find opportunities to become self-reliant and contribute to the local economy in their countries of asylum.

45. In 1996, total expenditure on local settlement projects amounted to $ 136.8 million.

(d) Voluntary repatriation

46. Voluntary repatriation continues to be regarded as the preferred durable solution to refugee situations world-wide. In its deliberations on the follow-up to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56, UNHCR reviewed its protection and assistance activities in countries of origin (documents EC/46/SC/CRP.16 and 17 refer). There is a growing recognition that in order to fulfil its statutory mandate of "seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees", UNHCR should place its assistance activities in a wider development perspective. In this regard, UNHCR has continued its efforts to build operational linkages to development organizations.

47. To enhance UNHCR's approach to voluntary repatriation operations, a Reintegration and Self Reliance Unit (RSRU) has been established. This Unit will provide UNHCR managers responsible for reintegration operations with assistance in programme design for the implementation of such operations, ensuring that lessons are learnt from past reintegration operations.

48. UNHCR's main operational instrument to promote the reintegration of returning refugees is the use of small-scale, community-based projects, known as Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). These are aimed at nurturing the self-reliant, albeit initial, recovery of war-torn societies and communities. UNHCR has developed a Policy and Methodological Framework for QIPs, which should ensure these aims are met.

49. Another tool for promoting self-reliance among refugees reintegrating in their country of origin and, where appropriate, to also promote local settlement, are micro-finance schemes. A manual on Employment and Microfinance Assistance has been prepared and is currently being tested in the field. Efforts within UNHCR are presently being undertaken to assess the appropriateness of micro-finance schemes as a tool for supporting self-reliance in refugee and returnee situations. Under this recently adopted approach, new initiatives are currently being prepared by UNHCR in Afghanistan, Georgia, Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

50. During 1996, $ 196.0 million was spent on voluntary repatriation.

(e) Resettlement

51. In 1996, some 35,800 refugees were resettled with UNHCR assistance, including 925 women at-risk and 560 medical cases. According to UNHCR field offices, another 7,200 cases (representing 20,300 persons) were submitted and were awaiting decisions from resettlement countries as at 31 December 1996. A further 4,500 cases (of more than 11,000 persons) were to be submitted or re-submitted in 1997 by UNHCR for resettlement. The total figure for 1996 represents a small decrease from the end-1995 figure of 36,077 refugees who departed for resettlement or who were, as at 31 December 1995, accepted and awaiting travel arrangements. These figures do not include many other persons of concern to UNHCR who are admitted as refugees in third countries under specific resettlement and family reunification programmes, often with the active support of NGO partners.

52. In its consideration of resettlement issues, the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee welcomed the June 1996 issuance of the Resettlement Handbook, a user-friendly reference to standards, procedures and priorities for UNHCR and resettlement countries. The Executive Committee also encouraged the regular exchange of information as part of ongoing consultations.

53. The Working Group on Resettlement, comprised of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Governments, met five times in 1996 and, most recently, in January 1997. In June 1996, UNHCR convened the Formal Consultation on Resettlement with NGO participation. Three tripartite consultations also took place on a regional basis in Toronto, Canada; Canberra, Australia; and Stockholm, Sweden. The Working Group was a key reference in UNHCR's follow-up to the Nordic proposal to initiate a two-year pilot project to diversify resettlement opportunities and to improve implementation.

54. In January 1997, UNHCR endorsed a strategy for improved management of resettlement processes, in accordance with the Delphi Plan of Action (referred to in chapter III, section C.3). The main components of the

strategy are: joint reviews by the Resettlement Section with Operations of resettlement needs; designation in a situation, where needed, of an officer responsible for resettlement functions, with appropriate reporting relationships and responsibilities; a new and intensive training programme for resettlement staff in the field; a streamlined submissions process, equipped with a database and other in-process monitoring features; and an effective information exchange process among all partners in resettlement.

B. Programme themes and priorities

1. Refugee women

55. UNHCR continues to follow up the relevant strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform of Action by integrating activities based on these objectives into the delivery of its multi-sectoral programmes for refugee women. The strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform of Action of particular concern to UNHCR include means of addressing the problems of violence against women, women and armed conflict, and the human rights of women. UNHCR's work in these areas takes into account the various United Nations instruments and the principles set out therein, and the strategies of the Platform of Action. Following the Beijing Conference, UNHCR set up a Reference Group for Refugee Women to advise and assist the High Commissioner in the implementation of the UNHCR Policy and Guidelines on Refugee Women, identifying obstacles to their implementation and recommending solutions.

56. A major effort to integrate refugee women's concerns and needs into all protection and assistance programmes is underway, both through the progressive institutionalization of People Oriented Planning (POP) training at the field level, and through the work of four recently appointed Regional Advisers on Refugee Women.

57. In September 1996, activities commenced under the Bosnian Women's Initiative (BWI) proposed and initially funded by the Government of the United States of America. The objective of the BWI is to promote activities which empower Bosnian women and provide opportunities for their self-reliance and self-sufficiency. This initiative embraces both returnee refugee and displaced women, enabling them to rebuild their lives and contribute to the long-term reconstruction and democratization of their communities and country. A similar initiative for Rwanda has been initiated by the High Commissioner. It aims at the economic empowerment of women in Rwanda, thereby strengthening the social structure of the post-genocide society and facilitating the process of reconciliation and reintegration in the country.

2. Refugee Children

58. UNHCR has embarked on a comprehensive plan of follow-up to the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. This will involve support for the work of a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on Children and Armed Conflict, and the preparation of a first year work plan with UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and other organizations.

59. In February 1997, UNHCR launched a world-wide evaluation of its programmes for refugee children and adolescents. The results of this

evaluation will help in the development of a rights based, goal oriented, agenda for refugee children and adolescents.

60. Based on the success of the regional approach to refugee children's issues adopted in the Great Lakes region of Africa during the Rwanda-Burundi emergency, plans are underway to deploy senior advisors for child and adolescent welfare to other regions. Additional expertise in child rights, peace education, conflict resolution, and community support for children, adolescents and families is also being mobilized.

61. UNHCR is committed to ensuring that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) becomes the normative frame of reference for all of its relief and reintegration operations. UNHCR has, therefore, begun developing, in partnership with the International Save the Children Alliance, and in close cooperation with UNICEF, a CRC based capacity building programme for UNHCR, NGOs and other implementing partners.

62. UNHCR is planning to establish a Trust Fund for Refugee Children and Adolescents to support capacity building, to pilot innovative projects, and to develop an education programme for conflict resolution, peace education and promotion of children's rights. The Trust Fund is additional to regular programming for children, adolescents and families.

3. Environment

63. Further to the adoption of a reformulated policy on the environment at the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee in 1995, UNHCR published Environmental Guidelines in June 1996. The Guidelines identify a number of measures applicable to all phases of UNHCR's environmental operations, as well as environmental measures specific to refugee assistance operations, for instance, in phases of emergency, care and maintenance, and durable solutions. The Guidelines also elaborate various environmental measures in relation to UNHCR activities, which include; consideration of the carrying capacity of the local environment and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas in site selection and camp planning; promotion of energy-saving stoves, energy saving cooking methods; economic and educational programmes designed to reduce fuelwood collection; and controlled fuelwood harvesting.

64. Implementation of the policy set out in the Guidelines has included a number of projects and activities in the field and at Headquarters. Progress has been achieved on incorporating environmental considerations into related sectoral guidelines. In addition, a geographical information system (GIS) environmental database is being developed and testing of other appropriate environmental technologies is under way. A major project was initiated in December 1996 to develop training materials for UNHCR and partner organizations, with the aim of promoting sound environmental practices in refugee affected areas. Particular attention has been given to promoting the implementation of the Guidelines in the field. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, comprehensive measures taken with partner organizations include establishing tree nurseries and reforestation, promoting alternative energies and fuelwood provision. Since the repatriation of refugees at the end of 1996, there have been steps to address the rehabilitation needs of former refugee hosting areas. Similar environmental activities have been conducted in other countries such as Kenya, Nepal and Uganda. In addition, some model

projects were introduced, including an environmental education project in Kenya and a comprehensive environment and energy planning project in the United Republic of Tanzania.

65. An international symposium in April 1996 was jointly organized with IOM and Refugee Policy Group, an NGO, on "Environmentally Induced Population Displacements and Environmental Impacts Resulting from Mass Migrations".

66. Considerable effort continues to be made to assure essential sound coordination and collaboration with donors and other international organizations.

4. Building Linkages with Development and Financial Institutions

67. UNHCR continues to develop linkages with development and financial institutions, primarily to ensure the sustainability of solutions to refugee problems, especially that of voluntary repatriation. Overall collaboration with the World Bank progressed 1996. During the annual consultations between UNHCR and the World Bank in December 1996, agreements were reached on selected countries to be targeted for enhanced operational cooperation. In conjunction with the Grameen Bank/Grameen Trust, micro-credit schemes were introduced in Afghanistan. In March 1996, an MOU was signed with UNICEF. Newly revised MOUs with WFP and WHO became effective in March 1997 and a framework for cooperation with UNDP was concluded in April 1997.

C. Programme Management and Implementation

1. General

68. In a decision of the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee, the High Commissioner was requested to initiate a process of informal technical consultations on the question of overhead costs for NGO implementing partners, in particular Headquarters costs. Four consultative meetings were held between December 1995 and March 1996, which resulted in a proposed modification and clarification of UNHCR's policy on NGO overhead costs, which was endorsed by the Standing Committee at its meeting of June 1996 (A/AC.96/873). The new policy became effective as of 1 July 1996.

69. The question of the audit certification of UNHCR's implementing partners has also been the subject of considerable attention and concern on the part of the Executive Committee, the Board of External Auditors, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), and Internal Audit. Current audit requirements place overwhelming emphasis on post-project completion certification, providing, at best, information which is too late for corrective action. Current proposals call for a standard requirement to provide a set of audited accounts in order to allow UNHCR to assess financial management capacity in advance (i.e. a pre-qualification of implementing partners) combined with a policy of selective interim and post-completion audits.

70. UNHCR's Asset Management System, introduced in 1994, is aimed at increasing the capability of each Field Office to improve the control of

assets purchased by UNHCR for its own use and that of implementing partners. Bar-code readers enable Field Offices to undertake annual physical checks of all UNHCR purchased assets being used by implementing partners, NGOs and government agencies.

71. Following the decentralization of training activities during 1995, a large part of the financial assistance provided to implementing partner staff and government counterparts for training was covered either under individual country operational projects or those administered by Headquarters work units responsible for specific areas of training. With regard to programme management training in particular, during 1996 UNHCR continued to provide such training to its staff on topics covering the programme management system, needs assessment, project design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, working with implementing partners, and the role of programme and field support staff. In this context, a programme and project management handbook for UNHCR implementing partners was issued in April 1996. In the latter half of 1996, however, the number of training courses was sharply reduced, pending the introduction of changes in programme management procedures.

2. Evaluation

72. The past year has been a period of development and transition in the evaluation function of the Inspection and Evaluation Service. In view of the limited resources dedicated to this function, other means of reviewing and analyzing the various subjects proposed for evaluation have had to be adopted. As a consequence, UNHCR has relied to a much greater extent on the use of outside expertise to carry out evaluations and has delegated many evaluations to the field level and other organizational units. In addition, workshops, such as a lessons learned workshop covering UNHCR's emergency response in Burundi and Rwanda, have been successfully organized in a manner that allows them to be used as evaluation tools.

73. Using these new approaches UNHCR has been able to complete a large number of major evaluation studies during 1996 and the beginning of 1997 which include: a review of UNHCR's Women Victims of Violence Project in Kenya; an evaluation of UNHCR's repatriation operation to Mozambique; reviews of reintegration efforts in Mozambique, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Afghanistan; a review of UNHCR's capacity-building efforts in Central and Eastern Europe; a review of UNHCR's phase-out strategies in selected countries of origin; a review of staff security and stress; a review of UNHCR's implementing arrangements and implementing partner selection procedures; a review of UNHCR's education policy; and a lessons learned exercise reviewing the provision of security in refugee camps.

74. During 1996, inspection missions have also been carried out in 22 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. Subsequent follow-up to these missions was actively pursued after their findings and recommendations were presented to the High Commissioner.

3. Delphi Project

75. At the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee in October 1995, the High Commissioner made a commitment to restructure the way in which UNHCR worked, so as to improve the delivery, accountability and performance of the

Office. This process of institutional reform was named Project Delphi and was formally launched in a directive from the High Commissioner to all staff on 4 December 1995.

76. Under Phase I of Project Delphi (December 1995 to May 1996) a broad conceptual framework for change was developed. This process was led by the Change Management Group (CMG), made up of UNHCR staff with Field and Headquarters experience. Three Focus Groups, concentrating on three broad areas of UNHCR's management processes (operations, people and money) were formed to assist the CMG in its work. All UNHCR offices in the Field, as well as staff at Headquarters, were invited to help in identifying areas requiring change through a structure of small groups known as Delphi Cells. The CMG presented its report to the High Commissioner and to the UNHCR Senior Management Committee (SMC) on 1 May 1996, who then endorsed it. Its main recommendations, which became the "overarching principles" of Project Delphi, are as follows; adopting a situational rather than country-based approach to operations planning and management, focusing on all aspects of a refugee problem; maintaining a focus on achieving a durable solution to a problem; better integration of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities; moving operational decision-making closer to the "point of delivery"; enhancing implementing arrangements; and an emphasis on effective monitoring, self-evaluation and control.

77. Phase II (June to October 1996) of Project Delphi was dedicated to Action Planning. The High Commissioner established a temporary Planning Group under the direction of the Deputy High Commissioner to turn the conceptual framework for change developed by the CMG into an Action Plan. Senior management-led temporary working groups were also created to examine and formulate recommendations in three broad categories: core processes; structure and internal communications; and support functions. The Plan of Action, which outlined the proposed broad directions for change in the various sectors of UNHCR activity, was presented to the Executive Committee's Standing Committee on 2 October 1996. The Standing Committee welcomed the Action Plan and endorsed its broad directions.

78. Project Delphi has now entered Phase III, the implementation phase, expected to be largely completed by the end of 1998. The Action Plan has been transformed into a detailed Implementation Plan listing what actions will be taken and by whom to achieve the objectives set out in the Plan of Action, the expected time frame required to carry them out, the desired output and the resource implications. This will be presented to the Standing Committee at its session on 30 April 1997. The components of the Plan are: strategic/global policy; Operations Management System (OMS); operations (policy/management); protection support; operational support; financial services; human resources management; information and communications systems; training; internal oversight; internal communications and record management; and other management issues.

79. The shift in focus from Headquarters to the Field envisaged under Project Delphi is expected to result in a significant reduction in resource requirements for Headquarters during the period of 1997 and 1998, as the project is implemented.

D. Regional developments in Africa

1. West Africa Operations

80. As a result of a Peace Accord concluded on 30 November 1996 between the newly elected civilian Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), prospects for the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees in the sub-region have significantly increased. In late December 1996, the Government of Sierra Leone requested UNHCR to assist in the repatriation of approximately 380,000 Sierra Leonean refugees, of whom 250,000 had sought asylum in Guinea, 120,000 in Liberia, 4,000 in Gambia and 6,000 elsewhere. In response, UNHCR fielded an assessment mission to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in January 1997.

81. The mission witnessed spontaneous movements of both Sierra Leonean IDPs and refugees back to their homes and concluded, inter alia, that the security situation in most parts of the country had improved. Significantly, an overwhelming majority of Sierra Leonean refugees in the neighbouring countries expressed a willingness to return home.

82. In February 1997, UNHCR commenced a pilot project to repatriate Sierra Leonean refugees from Monrovia, Liberia. As of 2 March 1997, a total of 1,317 Sierra Leonean refugees had returned home under this project. Preparatory activities have commenced for a large-scale voluntary repatriation operation. A United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal on Sierra Leone, including UNHCR's funding requirements, was launched in March 1997.

83. In early April 1996, expectations for the voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees in the sub-region remained unrealized due to the outbreak of fighting in Monrovia, Liberia. As a result, thousands of Liberians were forced to flee into neighbouring countries where they faced a growing reluctance to grant asylum following incursions of fighters from the Liberian warring factions. Furthermore, the insecurity prevailing in Liberia has adversely impacted on UNHCR's activities, to the extent that regular access was limited to only 30,000 out of an estimated population of 120,000 Sierra Leonean refugees.

84. Since April 1996, the international community, under the leadership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), endeavoured to put the Liberian peace process back on track. During the Summit held in Abuja, Nigeria in August 1996, these efforts culminated in the endorsement of the revised timetable of the implementation of the peace process which would lead to elections on 30 May 1997. In accordance with the revised timetable, the disarmament and demobilisation phase was undertaken and successfully completed according to schedule. The voluntary repatriation of some 768,000 Liberian refugees in the sub-region, however, which was scheduled to take place between 22 November 1996 and 31 January 1997, did not materialize due to the absence of basic security conditions in areas of return.

85. Following on these developments, and in an effort to advance the final stage of the peace process in Liberia, the Ministerial Meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia held in February 1997 concluded that Liberian refugees will be allowed to register and vote only once they have returned to Liberia. UNHCR has therefore continued to maintain a proactive approach to

the situation and, as such, has initiated a series of actions to facilitate the repatriation of those refugees willing to return to Liberia before the elections.

86. During the reporting period, food assistance to Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea has gradually been shifted from general distribution to targeted feeding. On the basis of socio-economic surveys, which were conducted in both countries, UNHCR reinforced income-generating and agricultural activities in order to improve the living conditions of rural refugees pending their return home. In an effort to mitigate the degradation of environment resulting from the presence of refugees in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, a four year environment rehabilitation programme for refugee affected areas has been initiated by UNHCR in 1997.

87. For the past two years peace and security have gradually been restored in northern Mali and the rate of return of Malian refugees has significantly increased. Following the voluntary repatriation of some 80,000 Malian refugees in 1995 and 1996, the number of refugees in neighbouring countries has decreased from 150,000 to 70,000. UNHCR, after having reinforced its presence in northern Mali and implemented a repatriation and rehabilitation pilot scheme in 1995, commenced with broader reintegration activities in 1996 focusing on the rehabilitation of basic services (water, health and education). A programme launched in 1996 to support income-generating activities for women is underway and results so far have been very encouraging.

88. Despite the implementation of a reintegration programme in Mauritania in favour of local populations as well as spontaneous returnees from Senegal and Mali, the number of refugees in Senegal and Mali remained at 60,000 and 15,000 respectively.

89. Following the normalization of the political situation in Togo, in the course of 1995, a significant number of Togolese refugees are reported to have returned from Ghana and Benin, reducing this caseload from the 300,000 to less than 15,000 in the two countries. The majority of the returnees went back to the capital Lomé where a reintegration programme targeting the rehabilitation of communal infrastructures, such as schools and health centres, has been implemented.

90. Given the high number of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees in West Africa, initial steps have been taken to seek closer operational cooperation between UNHCR and ECOWAS. It is hoped that this approach will help foster durable solutions to forced population displacement in the region.

2. Central Africa Operations

91. There are 28,000 Sudanese refugees in the Central African Republic and 96,500 in north-eastern Zaire who have, for the most part, achieved self-sufficiency. Only new arrivals and vulnerable groups are receiving food assistance. Their number is estimated at some 15,400 in Zaire and 3,000 in the Central African Republic. In the Central African Republic, a recent expert study concluded that total food self-sufficiency will depend on the

dissolution of the over-populated camp of Mboki and the resettlement of the refugees on more fertile agricultural land around the existing settlement.

3. East and Horn of Africa Operations

92. A census carried out in the camps in eastern Sudan during March 1996 indicated a reduction of over 50 per cent in the population of Eritrean refugees, who currently stand at 132,907. Rising tension between Sudan and Eritrea, as well as differences of approach between the two Governments, continued to stall the prospects of repatriation throughout 1996. Following intensive high level negotiations, both Governments have recently confirmed their readiness to resume the organized voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan, on the basis of bilateral arrangements with UNHCR.

93. The census also determined the remaining number of Ethiopian refugees in the camps. Some 27,000 refugees were repatriated between 15 December 1995 and mid-1996 before the onset of the rainy season. The repatriation of some 23,000 remaining in exile should be completed by the end of 1997.

94. In 1992, Kenya was hosting a refugee population exceeding 400,000 in 11 settlements. By the end of 1996, the UNHCR assisted refugee population in Kenya had been reduced to 169,813. Of these refugees, 131,278 are Somalis, 33,438 are Sudanese and 4,533 are Ethiopian. These refugees benefit from care and maintenance programmes aimed at maintaining their basic health, education and nutritional status. Measures are also being taken to promote self-sufficiency and rehabilitation of the environment in refugee affected areas.

95. The UNHCR Branch Office in Kenya has also been actively promoting the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Kenya. Between 1992 and 1996, some 231,829 refugees were assisted to return to their home areas. Of these returnees, 154,872 were Somalis, 61,184 were Ethiopians and 15,773 were of other nationalities.

96. The Cross Border Operation (CBO), which has been in place since 1992, aims at stabilizing the population movements inside Somalia and creating conditions conducive for the return of Somali refugees to their home areas. Since its inception, the CBO focused on the Geddo and Lower Juba valley regions, from where the majority of the Somalis in Kenya originated. Owing to the unsettled political situation in Somalia, however, the focus of CBO activities since 1995 have shifted towards pursuing rehabilitation activities in some parts of Somalia that are considered safe for the return of refugees.

97. In Uganda, the Government's continued generous policy of land allocation to refugees has enabled the establishment of local settlements. It should be noted, however, that integration programmes have been adversely affected by deteriorating security conditions in the northern part of the country. The ongoing conflict in southern Sudan has resulted in an increase in the population of Sudanese refugees in Uganda from 210,000 to 226,000 since the end of 1995. The deteriorating situation in the Great Lakes Region resulted in an additional influx of Zairian and Rwandan refugees into Uganda, whose numbers rose respectively from 12,000 to 27,300 and from 6,800 to 16,200 over the reporting period.

98. A summit meeting, held at the end of November 1996, of the States comprising the Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD), endorsed a programme aimed at greater regional cooperation in the Horn and Eastern Africa region. Amongst their priority activities are issues of conflict prevention and management, and humanitarian activities, including the repatriation and sustainable reintegration of returnees. This focus and direction by a prominent regional organization promises significant developments in the facilitation of repatriation operations and also in the area of prevention and mitigation of future conditions which might provoke the displacement of people in the region. UNHCR is in regular contact with IGAD and plans to extend and broaden its cooperation with this organization.

4. Great Lakes Operations

99. UNHCR activities in the Great Lakes region during 1996 were broadly characterized by the continued promotion of voluntary repatriation as the only durable solution for refugees in Burundi (until July), Zaire (until November) and United Republic of Tanzania (until mid-December); the provision of essential care and maintenance assistance in the refugee camps until the commencement of the massive repatriation of Rwandan refugees; the return of almost one and a half million Rwandan refugees from Zaire and United Republic of Tanzania to their home communes in a period of less than two months; and the ongoing attempts to identify and assist the remaining refugees in eastern Zaire on both sides of the confrontation line.

100. UNHCR began its 1996 activities in the Great Lakes on the expectation that the repatriation of the estimated total refugee population of over 1.8 million would increase. Initiatives, such as the second follow-up meeting of the Bujumbura Conference in Addis Ababa on 29 February 1995, focused on the obstacles to repatriation and sought to resolve the impasse on voluntary repatriation. To break the prevailing status quo, UNHCR also formulated a set of proposals to facilitate all possible means for the early and safe return of Rwandan refugees from the countries of asylum. In the same spirit, UNHCR officially excluded from its mandate all those Rwandans who had been indicted by the International Tribunal for Rwanda. Despite these efforts, large scale return did not occur prior to the repatriation of all Rwandan refugees from Burundi in July, the massive repatriation of some 726,000 Rwandan refugees from Zaire in November and December 1996, and the massive repatriation movement from the United Republic of Tanzania of over 500,000 Rwandan refugees in December 1996 and January 1997.

(a) Rwanda

101. During the massive repatriation of some 720,900 Rwandan refugees from North Kivu between November and December 1996, UNHCR worked to ensure the viability of humanitarian corridors from entry points to returnee communes of origin. Close cooperation with the Rwandan authorities permitted entry procedures to be accelerated. Despite the scale and speed of this movement, in addition to the return of over 500,000 Rwandan refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania in December 1996, UNHCR, together with other humanitarian agencies, was able to make arrangements to receive them. During the mass return through Gisenyi in November, over 10,000 children were

separated from their parents. UNHCR, together with other actors concerned, managed to reunite more than half of them with their families within 24 hours.

102. In response to the massive return, UNHCR immediately deployed additional staff to adequately cover all aspects of the reception and reintegration of these returnees. Additional returnee monitors were also deployed to expand activities in communes of origin, enhancing the capacity of Rwandan institutions to support the reintegration process.

103. As a result of these events, UNHCR's assistance programme in Rwanda underwent a radical expansion of activities, as well as a shift in emphasis towards reintegration and rehabilitation activities. UNHCR intends to ensure the sustainability of returnee absorption capacity at all levels (central Government, prefectural and communal), and to provide an adequate response to the needs of returnees in areas in which they resettle. To this end, assistance will encompass whole communities and aim to bridge the gap between emergency and development assistance.

104. UNHCR will also continue to carry out its monitoring function during the course of 1997 to ensure that returnees are not subject to discrimination and are accorded basic rights. Special efforts will be made to assist women in respect to their property rights, special shelter needs and legal assistance. UNHCR will also strengthen the capacities of the central and local authorities by financing institutional support and capacity building programmes.

(b) Zaire

105. Deterioration of the security situation in eastern Zaire throughout 1996 and, in particular, the rapidly deteriorating security situation in and around Bukavu, compelled all United Nations international staff and NGOs to vacate Bukavu on 25 October.

106. In 15 November 1996, fighting at Mugunga camp between the insurgents and the ex-Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) prompted the refugees to leave, and most returned to Rwanda. By the end of December 1996, 720,900 had arrived in Rwanda, with more than half a million having returned during the first four days of the movement.

107. The remaining refugees from the former Kivu camp dispersed and marched westward towards Kisangani. Part of the remaining refugees, amounting to some 220,000 persons, were later located in Tingi Tingi, Amisi and Shabunda camps. UNHCR established an office in Kisangani and began an emergency assistance programme to promote repatriation.

108. As a result of the fighting between the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation (ADFL) and government forces in Kisangani, some 150,000 refugees from Tingi Tingi, Amisi and Shabunda fled to Ubundu, on the east bank of the Zaire river. At the time of reporting, UNHCR continued to face serious problems in gaining access to refugees in Ubundu and elsewhere in the area. An elaborate repatriation plan has been set up and is in the process of being implemented. The plan calls for a network of way stations and transit centres to be set up along major repatriation routes which would be designed to draw groups of refugees who have been in hiding or living among

local populations out of the forest and local villages. The plan aims at encouraging the refugees to receive emergency and repatriation assistance. A humanitarian rehabilitation programme is under way in areas where the former existence of refugee camps left a significant negative impact on the local economy and social infrastructures. UNHCR is working with local NGOs and other United Nations agencies on the implementation of this programme.

(c) The United Republic of Tanzania

109. UNHCR's major objective during 1996 remained the active promotion of voluntary repatriation, in accordance with decisions taken in a number of tripartite commission meetings between the United Republic of Tanzania, the Government of Rwanda, and UNHCR. Despite these efforts, a limited number of Rwandan refugees chose to return during most of 1996. Encouraged, however, by the massive repatriation from Zaire, the authorities from the United Republic of Tanzania announced 31 December 1996 as the deadline for the repatriation of all Rwandan refugees. On 14 December, the return movement started with thousands of refugees from Ngara walking back to Rwanda. The mass return from Ngara was followed by a similar movement from Karagwe, and by early January 1997 the vast majority of Rwandan refugees had returned home from the United Republic of Tanzania. Fifty residual Rwandan refugees have had their cases reviewed by the National Eligibility Committee, and as at 31 March 1997 there were no recognized Rwandan refugees receiving assistance in western region of the United Republic of Tanzania.

110. The influx of Burundian refugees into Ngara District, which began at the end of 1995, continued into 1996. The new arrivals necessitated the development of a new camp and the expansion of an existing camp. In July 1996 a second influx began, this time into the Kigoma region. Due to the precarious security situation in Burundi, UNHCR's main objectives for the Burundian refugees have remained ensuring their protection, and the provision of care and maintenance assistance.

111. In November 1996, following the rebel advance in eastern Zaire, Zairian refugees also started arriving in the Kigoma region at a rate of some 1000 per day. There are indications that as security is restored in some parts of eastern Zaire, the Zairian refugees may choose to return voluntarily and a repatriation plan has been prepared accordingly.

112. As a result of these events, there are at present some 375,000 Burundian, Rwandan and Zairian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania, 278,000 of whom are from Burundi. Of this group, more than 100,000 arrived in Kigoma during the last two months of 1996 and the first two months of 1997. The remaining caseload of 105,000 Burundian refugees in the Ngara region were regrouped in one camp.

(d) Uganda

113. At the outset of the fighting, some 12,000 Zairians living near the Zaire/Uganda border and some Rwandan refugees fled and crossed into Uganda. While the Ugandan Government had agreed to allocate land to the new arrivals, in the course of their relocation only 9,000 of them were transported to a new site. The remainder are believed to have returned to Zaire.

(e) Regional Assistance Provided in 1996

114. An important element to UNHCR's regional strategy in 1996 was the preparation and continued updating of contingency plans outlining how UNHCR would cope with new emergencies. UNHCR maintained a regional emergency stockpile, located in Kampala, Uganda, and Ngara, the United Republic of Tanzania. Due to funding shortfalls, however, UNHCR was obligated to release stock for the regular programme, thereby decreasing the contingency stockpile to a level equivalent to cover a caseload of 250,000. For 1997, despite the mass return of refugees which occurred in late 1996 and early 1997, there remains a very significant potential for further crisis, whether in Burundi, Zaire, or Rwanda. Therefore, UNHCR has decided to maintain the contingency stock strategy, and non-food items to cover the needs of a caseload of 500,000 persons will be procured and positioned in the coming months.

5. Southern Africa Operations

115. In Angola slow progress in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol has hampered the implementation of organized voluntary repatriation. In the absence of concrete confidence building indicators in Angola, such as the formation of a Government of National Unity and a unified army, UNHCR did not promote or organize voluntary repatriation in 1996. Instead it focused its attention on strengthening basic facilities in returnee areas and building capacities for the reception of the large number of returnees that are expected to arrive once conditions improve.

116. Notwithstanding the above, a significant number of spontaneous voluntary movements took place in 1996, as some 59,000 Angolan refugees returned home. These bring the total figure of Angolan refugees that have returned home since the launching of the UNHCR repatriation operation in June 1995 to more than 74,000. In countries of asylum, primarily in Zambia and Zaire, preparatory activities for the eventual organized voluntary repatriation of refugees have advanced well.

117. UNHCR launched an appeal in February 1997 for $ 38.2 million for the 1997 repatriation operation. The year will be a decisive one for Angola as the United Nations Angola Verification Mission's (UNAVEM III) mandate expired in March. A Government of National Unity and Reconciliation took Office as expected in the same month. It is hoped and envisioned by UNHCR that continued progress in the reconciliation process will make it possible for over 300,000 Angolan Refugees to return during 1997.

118. As a result of the recent conflict in Zaire, an increasing number of refugees have been crossing the border into Zambia. The total number of refugees registered by the Government as at 15 February was 3,400. The majority of the refugees are arriving by boat at Mpulungu, the main port in Zambia on Lake Tanganyika. Preliminary surveys indicate that the arrivals represent a mixture of refugees and displaced Zairians in transit to other locations in Lumumbashi. A small number of Rwandans and Burundians have also arrived. UNHCR has assisted the Government to set up a transit centre at Natende, some 230 kilometres from Mpulungu, which offers better facilities to refugees and relocates them away from the border. The Zambian Red Cross is currently implementing the programme of assistance including feeding and primary health care. As the fighting escalates inside Zaire, UNHCR and the

Government are preparing contingency plans and developing local capacities to respond to a large scale influx of refugees, should this occur.

119. Mid-1996 was marked by the successful conclusion of the repatriation and reintegration programme which benefited more than 1.7 million Mozambican refugees who returned to their home country from six countries of asylum in a period of three years (1993-1996). To make the voluntary repatriation of Mozambican refugees a truly durable solution, UNHCR implemented 1,575 QIPs, principally in water, health, transport,and educational sectors, in an attempt to assist in the reconstruction of socio-economic structures that were destroyed by the war. Hence water supply systems were rehabilitated, health clinics were reconstructed, roads and schools were repaired, both for the benefit of the Mozambican returnees and the local population, and in order to foster peaceful coexistence between the two groups. In addition, seeds and agricultural tools were provided to Mozambican returnees so as to enable them to produce adequate food for their domestic consumption. As the UNHCR programme phased out in June 1996, a bumper harvest was being collected, due to good rains, large areas were under cultivation and there was continued peace in the country.

120. UNHCR in Mozambique was also committed to ensuring the smooth transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development, and in this connection, UNHCR donated a number of non-expendable assets to the Government, United Nations agencies and NGOs in Mozambique who agreed to continue with UNHCR initiated projects.

121. It should be noted that, as a result of the sustained peace in Mozambique, UNHCR invoked the cessation clause for Mozambican and Malawian refugees as of 31 December 1996. Hence, Mozambican and Malawian refugees who decided to remain in asylum countries no longer qualify for UNHCR assistance and prima facie protection.

122. In view of the above, as from January 1997, UNHCR will be mainly involved with small numbers of urban refugees in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland and Namibia. In South Africa, however, there are presently over 20,000 asylum-seekers from 55 different countries. South Africa has established, with training and advice from UNHCR, a refugee determination procedure. So far some 3,700 asylum-seekers have received refugee status through this procedure. In order to promote the self-reliance of urban refugees, most of whom originate from Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire and Angola, UNHCR is now focusing on activities which can enable the self-reliance of these refugees, and thereby avoid their becoming dependent on assistance. Based on recent consultant recommendations, appropriate income generating and vocational training activities will be encouraged. UNHCR Branch Offices will also discuss with the relevant Governments the possibilities for local integration of the urban refugees.

123. In Malawi, given the previous presence of some 1.3 million Mozambican refugees, the environment remains severely damaged. In response, UNHCR played a proactive role and sought funds from donors to repair the environment. Several donors responded favourably and this enabled UNHCR to establish a trust fund for the reforestation and rehabilitation of villages which previously accommodated Mozambican refugees.

124. UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Southern African Development Community(SADC) on 25 July 1996. The cooperation between UNHCR and SADC will focus, inter alia, on social, economic and political issues in the Southern African region which have a bearing on the root causes of forced population displacement, refugee protection, provision of humanitarian assistance and the search for durable solutions.

E. Regional developments in the Americas

125. Two developments have paved the way for definitive solutions for the last major group of Central American refugees remaining in the region after the completion of the International Conference on Refugees in Central America (CIREFCA) process. These are, the successful conclusion of the peace negotiations in Guatemala culminating with the signing of a Peace Agreement at the end of December 1996 after 36 years of internal conflict, and the launching of a migratory stabilization plan in respect of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico, following a public announcement by the Government in August 1996.

126. While developments in Central America and Mexico are encouraging, growing tensions in certain countries of South America, in particular the resurgence of armed military activities, indicate the existence of dangerous, although isolated, pockets of instability, which could generate new refugee situations.

127. During the period under review, individual asylum-seekers, originating from outside the region, have continued to arrive in several Latin American countries, particularly in South America. This group of asylum-seekers pose challenges for Governments of the region and for UNHCR in terms of protection, assistance, andthe identification and implementation of durable solutions due to certain problems, such as their lack of personal documentation, and the absence of linguistic and cultural affinities.

128. UNHCR continued its efforts to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the region, particularly in Mexico and Central America, with an aim to enhance specific contributions of refugee and returnee men and women in formulating and achieving community goals and objectives. Special attention has been paid to Guatemalan refugee and returnee women in order to encourage and enable them to participate in productive projects and community organization, in an attempt to facilitate their integration into society and their recognition as equal partners in their respective communities.

129. Obligations in the region in 1996 totalled $ 17.9 million. Refugees, returnees and persons of concern to UNHCR in the Americas and the Caribbean at the end of 1996 stood at over 1.5 million. Of this number, only an estimated 47,000 were being assisted as refugees and some 34,000 as returnees.

1. North America Operations

130. In September 1996 the United States of America enacted new immigration legislation restricting access to asylum procedures. The new law provides for the "expedited removal" of persons seeking admission to the United States who possess false documents or no documents, unless they can demonstrate a "credible fear" of persecution. Also included are provisions for expanding the list of crimes which render a person ineligible to apply for asylum and

establishing a one-year time limit for filing an asylum application. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is engaged in developing regulations and procedures to implement the new legislation. UNHCR has offered extensive comments, both on the new legislation and on the proposed regulations.

131. In November 1996 the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration of Canada announced new measures aimed at regularizing the status of some Convention refugees who have been unable to become landed immigrants (permanent residents) in Canada, because they lack adequate personal identity documents. Without landed immigrant status, Convention refugees do not enjoy the right of family reunification, are ineligible to receive travel documents and face other difficulties with integration into Canadian society. The creation of the Undocumented Convention Refugees in Canada (UCRCC) will resolve the situation of Somali and Afghan refugees who were recognized as refugees at least five years ago. Convention refugees of other nationalities are not eligible for the UCRCC procedures.

132. The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) issued Guidelines on Child Refugee Claimants to respond to the special needs of children appearing before the IRB. They constitute one of the most comprehensive set of Guidelines adopted by any country operating a refugee determination system. The Guidelines, which took effect on 30 September 1996, apply to all refugee claimants under the age of 18.

2. Central America and Mexico Operations

133. The bulk of UNHCR activities in Mexico and Guatemala have continued to focus on Guatemalan refugees and returnees. Some 30,000 Guatemalan refugees remain in camps and settlements in Mexico in the three southern states of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo. During the last quarter of 1996 and the first quarter of 1997, considerable progress was achieved in the implementation of the migratory stabilization plan for Guatemalan refugees. Under this plan, Guatemalan refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo who wish to remain in Mexico are being provided with immigrant documentation and those with Mexican children or spouses have access to accelerated naturalization procedures. In December 1996, the President of Mexico personally handed naturalization papers to 48 former Guatemalan refugees. Several hundred requests have been filed since. By the end of 1996, over 65 per cent of those who had requested an immigrant document were in possession of one, which, after five years, enables holders to apply for permanent residence. Only some 12 per cent of all those applying for documentation did not request immigrant documents. Given the already well advanced de facto integration of Guatemalan refugees in these two States, UNHCR's assistance is now geared mainly towards upgrading the infrastructure of basic services in the settlements and resolving the question of land titles. A funding agreement has been entered into between the European Community and the Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees (COMAR) for a regional development project targeting both Guatemalan refugees and neighbouring Mexican communities in Campeche and Quintana Roo.

134. Refugees in Chiapas (two-thirds of the total caseload), however, have not yet been given the same favourable migratory treatment as those in Campeche and Quintana Roo. They have continued to depend on care and

maintenance assistance, principally in the sectors of food, health and education, pending the identification of viable longer-term solutions.

135. During the course of 1996, a total 4,086 Guatemalan refugees returned to Guatemala, predominantly from Mexico, bringing the total number of returnees as at 1 January 1997 to 34,181 since repatriation movements started in 1984. Of this number, 16,608 returnees have repatriated on an individual basis and 17,573 returned collectively since collective movements were initiated in 1993. The number of returnees in 1996 fell short of initial projections and the number of returnees in 1997 are not expected to significantly increase, not withstanding the signing of the peace agreement. UNHCR continues to support repatriation movements and initial socio-economic reintegration through community-based QIPs. A shift of emphasis in UNHCR's activities from previous years is taking place in light of the provisions of the Peace Accords between the Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan Revolutionary Unit (URNG), which provide a new framework for coping with uprooted populations, new priorities for Governments and their absorption capacities, as well as prospects for increased operational involvement of development agencies and other actors.

136. In the rest of the sub-region, with the exception of Belize, the thrust of UNHCR's activities has been to act as a catalyst for the promotion of rights of refugees, returnees and other uprooted populations. Support has been given to strengthen national commitments and capacities to uphold asylum and international refugee law principles. Cooperation has been increased with national entities, United Nations agencies and NGOs, with the overall goal of ensuring that adequate national institutional frameworks and mechanisms are in place to guarantee the rights of individual asylum-seekers and to address potential new refugee situations. In this regard, special mention must be made of the signing of Letters of Understanding between UNHCR and the Ombudspersons Offices in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. In Belize, a QIP continues to be implemented to facilitate the local integration of several thousand Central American refugees who have not opted to repatriate.

137. In October 1996 a Regional forum on Human Rights, Refugees and Migration in Central America was held in San José, Costa Rica. The Forum, convened by the Central American Council of Human Rights Ombudspersons, was jointly organized by UNHCR, the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, ILO, IOM and UNICEF. The Forum adopted a series of recommendations and a plan of action for the protection of the human rights of uprooted populations in Central America. The Forum called upon UNHCR and other organizations dealing with uprooted populations to provide pertinent technical and financial support to the Central American Council of Human Rights Ombudspersons in order to effectively implement the recommendations.

138. In March 1997, UNHCR participated as an observer, together with IOM, IDB and the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), in the Second Regional Conference on Migration, hosted by the Government of Panama. The Conference, which gathered representatives from Canada, the United States of America, Mexico, the five Central American States, Belize and Panama, was convened to address the complex phenomenon of migration through a joint and comprehensive approach. The Conference adopted a Plan of Action, which, inter alia, recognized the fundamental difference between the protection to be granted to refugees, in conformity with international law, and the rights of migrants.

3. South America and the Caribbean Operations

139. The situation in the Caribbean has remained relatively stable, and continues to be monitored closely. During the reporting period there were signs of growing unrest in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Attempts by Haitian and Cuban groups to reach the United States of America continued, albeit in smaller numbers as compared to in 1994 and 1995. A small number of Haitians (50) were assisted by UNHCR in 1996 to repatriate, principally from the Dominican Republic.

140. In the whole region, there were an estimated 50,900 refugees and persons of concern, of whom only some 7,100 benefited from UNHCR assistance. The trend in arrivals of asylum-seekers, including those from countries outside the region stabilized, particularly in Brazil. Countries in South America with large internal displacement problems have also generated external flight, albeit in small numbers.

141. The focus of UNHCR activities in the region has been to strengthen the concept of an international protection institutional framework as a key to both prevention and durable solutions. The issuance of, or improvement to, existing refugee legislation has been pursued in this regard. In October 1996, Chile issued a decree amending the chapter on refugees of the Migration Law dating back to 1975. In Brazil, a refugee bill awaits final approval from the Senate after having been approved by Congress. The Governments of Uruguay and Paraguay are working on draft refugee laws. Taking into account the current trends of economic and political integration, UNHCR has also been actively promoting the coordination of refugee policies and the harmonization of legislation and procedures.

142. UNHCR attended the VI Ibero-American Summit held in Santiago, Chile, in November 1996. The theme of the Summit was Governance for an Efficient and Participative Democracy. The Summit was preceded in October 1996 by a Preparatory Meeting on Asylum held in Montevideo, Uruguay, where UNHCR participated as an observer. Throughout the meeting, UNHCR's interventions were actively solicited in discussions on several agenda items, which concerned principles of international protection and on UNHCR's activities in Latin America. The Final Declaration of the Conference recognizes the importance of refuge as a universal institution while at the same time underscoring the importance of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

F. Regional developments in Asia and the Pacific

1. South Asia Operations

143. Voluntary repatriation from Bangladesh to Myanmar is in its final phase, despite delays mainly resulting from limited clearances. The Myanmar Authorities have affirmed a commitment to complete a large-scale movement by the end of the first quarter of 1997. It is envisaged that not all 20,000 persons remaining in two camps in Bangladesh will return, and discussions between the concerned Authorities are under way to ensure a durable solution for any residual population. As at mid-March 1997, nearly 230,000 Muslim former residents of the Rakhine State had returned.

144. UNHCR has continued to expand and intensify its monitoring coverage of returnees, and Muslim populations in general, in northern Rakhine State. This is in parallel with the implementation of small-scale assistance projects aimed at stabilizing economically vulnerable groups, in particular female-headed households and landless families. UNHCR has unrestricted access to returnees, including those in detention, and staff are able to travel to all areas where assistance activities are being implemented. UNHCR has deferred its withdrawal from the area to the end of 1998, by which time it is hoped that more development oriented mechanisms will be in place to ensure continuity in the stabilization process.

145. Since April 1995, there has not been any voluntary repatriation movements of Sri Lankan Tamils from India due to the breakdown of peace talks and the resumption of the conflict between the Sri Lankan military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In January 1996, a Field Office was opened in Kilinochchi facilitating UNHCR's presence in an area where a significant number of IDPs were located. In mid-1996, the conflict further escalated, leading to the evacuation of UNHCR staff from Kilinochchi to Mallavi in the Vanni region. During 1996, over 6,000 earlier returnees from India as well as nearly 15,000 IDPs were provided shelter and relief assistance in the Open Relief Centres (ORCs) and transit centres, and some 150,000 to 200,000 IDPs, including earlier returnees from India, benefited from UNHCR funded community based micro-projects. Toward the end of February 1997, some 18,000 newly displaced persons arrived in the ORC in Madhu and Sub-ORC in Palampiddy, and over 7,600 persons had arrived in Tamil Nadu, India, since mid-1996. They are accommodated in existing government administered camps.

146. Within the framework of promoting self-reliance, the rationalization of the assistance programme in India for over 20,000 refugees and asylum-seekers (mostly Afghans) resulted in the reduction of the assisted caseload to a little over 10,000 persons by the end of 1996, with a further reduction to some 8,000 beneficiaries envisaged within the first quarter of 1997. Recent developments in Afghanistan have led to a trickle of new arrivals in New Delhi. In other developments during the reporting period, UNHCR expanded its refugee law promotion and dissemination activities in India, involving various governmental bodies, educational institutions, and NGOs.

147. There have been no significant developments regarding the situation of some 91,000 Bhutanese refugees and asylum-seekers in Nepal. At the seventh round of Bhutan-Nepal bilateral talks in April 1996, the two Governments agreed to continue bilateral consultations. UNHCR has reiterated its readiness to support the implementation of measures that might be mutually agreed upon between the Governments to achieve durable solutions for this population. During the last quarter of 1996 a number of demonstrations and marches were organized by refugee organizations to solicit support for their return to Bhutan.

2. East Asia and the Pacific Operations

148. The seventh and final meeting of Steering Committee of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees, held in Geneva on 5 and 6 March 1996, reviewed the achievements of the CPA since its adoption in 1989. It noted with satisfaction that the objectives of the CPA had been successfully met. Clandestine departures from countries of origin had virtually ceased, the

principle of asylum had been preserved, effective screening procedures had been introduced in countries of first asylum, which facilitated the resettlement of recognized refugees to third countries and the repatriation of persons who did not fulfill internationally accepted criteria for refugee status to their country of origin. The Steering Committee thus declared the formal completion of the CPA in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) first asylum countries as of 30 June 1996 noting that solutions for the relatively larger caseload in Hong Kong would take longer.

149. During 1996, a total of 29,217 Vietnamese non-refugees were repatriated to their country of origin. In accordance with the conclusions of the Steering Committee, UNHCR progressively phased out its assistance in ASEAN first asylum camps commensurate with the rate of repatriation resulting in the closure of camps in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. The Philippine Government determined that some 1,600 Vietnamese non-refugees would be permitted to remain, pending future repatriation or other solutions. Thailand closed its camp for Vietnamese non-refugees in February 1997. As of 1 March 1997, a total of 755,315 Vietnamese refugees had been resettled in third countries since 1975 and over 106,000 Vietnamese non-refugees had repatriated to their county of origin under the CPA, leaving a much reduced post-CPA caseload of 4,149 non-refugees in Hong Kong, and some 160 others who were rejected on the basis of nationality in other locations. As of 1 March 1997, 1,432 pre-CPA prima-facie Vietnamese refugees remained in the region, of whom 1,345 were in Hong Kong. UNHCR has renewed its request for third countries to provide resettlement opportunities for the last of the Vietnamese refugees still in need of a durable solution.

150. During 1996, UNHCR continued to provide repatriation grants for non-refugees who voluntarily repatriated to Viet Nam, and supported micro-projects to benefit returnee communities, which included infrastructural improvements to schools, dispensaries, bridges and road construction. UNHCR also continued to monitor the well-being of returnees.

151. As of 1 March 1997, 27,310 Lao had returned voluntarily to their country of origin since 1981. Some 260 Lao repatriated during 1996, of whom, 235 returned from China. Although voluntary repatriation from Thailand to the Lao People's Democratic Republic came to a virtual halt during 1996, nearly 3,000 Lao were accepted for resettlement. Consequently, the residual population in Ban Napho camp requiring durable solutions was significantly reduced, with some 1,500 individuals remaining. In February 1997, the Government of Thailand announced its intention to close Ban Napho camp by 30 June 1997 and at a Tripartite Technical meeting in March 1997, the Governments of Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic announced their intention to achieve solutions for the residual Ban Napho population by that date.

152. During 1997 UNHCR will continue to provide repatriation grants to Lao returnees and assist with their integration within existing villages and rural resettlement sites. Particular attention will be given to vulnerable returnees, including the drug dependent, aged and female-headed households.

153. During 1996, a total of 426 Cambodians repatriated to their country of origin, mainly from Indonesia, with UNHCR assistance. UNHCR phased out its assistance activities for Cambodian returnees during 1996 and, during 1997,

will focus on the advocacy and promotion of refugee law and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees. The Office in Phnom Penh became a Liaison Office under UNHCR's Regional Office in Bangkok from January 1997.

154. The Chinese authorities have advised that up to 15,000 of the 288,000 Indo-Chinese refugees in China wish to repatriate to Viet Nam. In collaboration with the concerned Governments, a sample survey of the refugee population has been initiated to gauge more definitively the number of refugees who might wish to return to their country of origin. UNHCR's assistance is focused primarily on the local settlement of this caseload through a revolving credit mechanism aimed at the creation of employment opportunities for refugees.

155. At the end of 1996, some 101,000 refugees from Myanmar were residing along the border between Myanmar and Thailand, comprising some 79,000 Karen, 11,000 Mon and nearly 11,000 Karenni. These populations continued to be assisted by the Government of Thailand and/or the Burmese Border Consortium, which is composed of five NGOs. UNHCR staff from Bangkok have undertaken frequent missions to the border areas in order to monitor the welfare of these populations. The security situation of the Karen deteriorated in early 1997, following an escalation in military action within Myanmar, and incursions into camps within Thailand, which resulted in further displacement on both sides of the border and several thousand new arrivals in Thailand. UNHCR will continue to seek improved security and protection for ethnic minorities from Myanmar in Thailand.

156. Two major regional initiatives took place during 1996 concerning the promotion and dissemination of refugee law in Asia and the Pacific. On 28 and 29 November 1996, the Government of Australia and UNHCR co-hosted a Conference on Regional Approaches to Refugees and Displaced Persons in Asia and the Pacific, which was attended by representatives of 26 countries. The emphasis of the conference was on informal sharing of experiences and the identification of trends. It is expected that certain thematic issues of concern to the whole region will be explored at follow-up meetings in the region during 1997. The 11 to 13 December 1996 AALCC/UNHCR Commemorative Seminar on Refugees, which was held in Manila, Philippines, was attended by representatives of 22 governments in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The seminar focused on the 1966 AALCC "Bangkok Principles" with a view to their being updated in light of experiences within the concerned regions during the past 30 years. The issues of the refugee definition, asylum, solutions and burden-sharing, which were raised in Manila, will be further considered at the next regular session of the AALCC, which will be held in Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, in May 1997.

G. Regional developments in Europe

157. During the period under review, a major focus of UNHCR's activities in Europe was the preparation of a regional conference to address the problems of refugees, displaced persons and other categories of persons subjected to involuntary displacement, and returnees in CIS countries and relevant neighbouring States. In Western Europe, a number of countries have reviewed the status of persons under temporary protection following the signing of the Dayton Agreement. The total number of asylum-seekers in South Western European countries has shown a slight increase. The European Unions (EU) harmonization of national legislation and policies in Western Europe

continues to be closely monitored by UNHCR and a public position paper on the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference on the revision of the Maastricht Treaty was issued in November 1996. UNHCR's close involvement in the legislative processes in Central Europe was a main feature of its activities in this region. A gradual shift from training and institution building to integration related programmes was also a feature of UNHCR activities in Central Europe. The signing of a cease-fire agreement in Chechnya (Russian Federation) in August 1996 and political developments in the Caucasus required a continuation of relief assistance and programmes in this region.

1. CIS Conference

158. In the context of regional and comprehensive approaches, UNHCR, in cooperation with IOM and the OSCE, convened in Geneva on 30 and 31 May 1996 a conference to address the problem of refugees, displaced persons, other forms of involuntary displacement and returnees in the countries of the CIS and relevant neighbouring States. The Conference sought to address both potential involuntary movements as well as earlier and ongoing displacement in that region. The Conference adopted a Programme of Action which sets out practical measures based on a comprehensive approach taking into account internationally recognized human rights norms and standards. As a result of the Conference, UNHCR's activities in the region now include assistance to solve the problems of "formerly deported peoples" and "involuntarily relocating persons", both of which were highlighted by the Conference as being groups of concern.

159. National implementation plans for 1997 have been drawn up in the field with the concerned Governments, which indicate the priorities of CIS Governments and the respective roles of the various actors. These plans formed the basis for UNHCR and IOM programmes in 1997, which were presented jointly in an appeal for funds in November 1996.

2. Western Europe Operations

160. Since 1992, Western Europe has seen a downward trend in the number of asylum-seekers arriving in the sub-region. Available figures indicate some 250,000 asylum-seekers arrived during 1996, representing an overall decrease of nearly 10 per cent as compared to 1995. The pattern of arrivals in individual countries of the region, however, is not homogeneous, in that some countries have had an increase in applications compared to 1995, although most have witnessed a considerable reduction.

161. The process to harmonize policies in the field of asylum and refugees by members countries of the EU seems to have lost some momentum in 1996, after the position reached by the EU in November 1995 on the harmonization of Article 1A of the 1951 Geneva Convention. UNHCR continues to engage in an informal dialogue in matters pertaining to asylum and refugees and has, in the course of 1996, made contributions to this process in such areas as the treatment of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and the conditions for the reception of asylum-seekers. UNHCR considers the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference of the European Union (IGC) as a possible forum where a positive outcome might result from the discussions on the future of European Union asylum policy. The Office has addressed its views to the Member States, as well as to organs of the EU.

162. UNHCR welcomed the ratification by Estonia and Lithuania of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol in the first quarter of 1997, manifesting the ongoing work of UNHCR in the Baltic States to create a regime for asylum-seekers and refugees which is based on international standards.

163. While significant return movements from European host countries to Bosnia and Herzegovina occurred, intensifying during the summer months of 1996, they were much lower than initially expected. An important initiative by a number of Western European countries to facilitate the visa-free travel of refugees through these countries to Bosnia and Herzegovina was concluded and has greatly facilitated return movements to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

164. UNHCR's strategic direction in Western Europe is towards the gradual reduction of programmes and a shift of resources to the Baltic and CIS regions. Priorities in Western Europe will be given to the areas of advocacy, public awareness, training and network building, with a decrease in assistance activities, since these are considered the national responsibility of respective States. Links with institutions in Europe remain a priority for UNHCR, which is reflected in the opening of an office in Strasbourg to strengthen relations with the Council of Europe.

3. Central Europe Operations

165. In Central Europe, UNHCR continued its efforts to influence legislative processes aimed at establishing fair and accessible refugee determination procedures. UNHCR has endeavoured to assist Governments in institution and capacity building through training and limited assistance in countries where national structures for refugee status determination procedures are still at a rudimentary stage or need to be further developed. UNHCR has also continued its efforts in sensitizing all States concerned to the importance of comprehensively addressing the issue of integration of refugees in Central Europe. To this end, a series of seminars were organized by UNHCR with parliamentarians and senior government officials

166. In May 1996, the Parliament of the Czech Republic introduced a new amendment to the existing refugee law, which deleted the provision of the law that limited a refugees status to a maximum period of five years, thus allowing recognized refugees to apply for Czech citizenship after a five year stay in the Czech Republic. UNHCR also continued to closely monitor developments in legislation related to statelessness, citizenship and nationality in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In May 1996, the Parliament of the Czech Republic approved an amendment to the existing refugee law. Following this amendment, UNHCR, in cooperation with local NGO, established a project which aims to provide counselling and administrative guidance to individuals in the process of legalizing their Czech citizenship. Over 2000 persons, mostly children under foster care and detainees, are benefiting from this project.

167. In Romania, the asylum system is firmly established in municipal law, after the law relating to the status and regime of refugees in Romania was promulgated in April 1996 and entered into force in May 1996. UNHCR has been actively involved in each stage of the development of this new legislation. In similar developments in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, UNHCR has been active in offering advice throughout the respective processes to establish national legislation on asylum, aliens and refugees.

168. As a result of the repatriation and resettlement of Bosnians from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria, the number of de facto refugees has been reduced. Nevertheless, the number of asylum-seekers in Poland has increased by 2,300 persons during 1996, putting considerable pressure on refugee authorities responsible for refugee status determination. Temporary protection status for Bosnians in Austria was extended for another year and redefined to allow the inclusion of some individuals with no legal status. In the Czech Republic, alternative solutions are being offered to those de facto refugees who opt to remain and cannot return to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

169. The lack of affordable housing for asylum-seekers and refugees remains an obstacle for the rapid integration into the socio-economic structure of host countries and tends to encourage movements to Western Europe. In its endeavour to assist Governments in Central Europe, UNHCR has started to sensitize institutions, such as the European Union's programme to assist the European associate countries in Central Europe (PHARE) and the Council of Europe's Social Development Fund, to the need to address certain aspects of asylum which are beyond the mandate of UNHCR.

4. Eastern Europe Operations

170. In Armenia, UNHCR's assistance programme aims at supporting the local settlement of some 150,000 refugees identified as particularly vulnerable by the Government. The assistance provided contributes to alleviating poverty, enhancing education and improving health conditions, in particular for elderly, women and children. In addition, UNHCR promotes the establishment of legal procedures allowing refugees access to Armenian citizenship, in accordance with the governmental policy of integration.

171. In Azerbaijan, UNHCR's programme addresses the needs of a target group of 150,000 refugees and IDPs identified as vulnerable. In addition, UNHCR co-operates, in an inter-agency framework, with the recently created State Commission for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Liberated Areas and will continue providing assistance to returnees in the Fizuli and Agdam regions to help them settle in their areas of origin, where they have spontaneously returned.

172. In Georgia, UNHCR is assisting a population of some 150,000 IDPs, the large majority of whom originated from Abkhazia and, to a lesser extent, from South Ossetia. A two-pronged approach has been adopted to facilitate temporary settlement and promote self reliance of displaced persons who cannot envisage returning to their areas of origin in the foreseeable future. This approach also aims at creating conditions propitious to the return to Abkhazia and to South Ossetia of IDPs and refugees who decide to do so, in close consultation with all concerned authorities. In addition, UNHCR provides support to governmental administrative and legislative bodies to help them deal efficiently with migration and refugee issues.

173. In Belarus, UNHCR has assisted the Government in implementing existing refugee law and in establishing a reliable and fair procedure for refugee status determination. To this end, UNHCR actively promotes capacity building within the public administration, as well as with independent actors, such as NGOs and academic institutions. Assistance is also provided to the

Government in order to contribute to the establishment of reception centres to accommodate, in acceptable conditions, refugees and asylum-seekers pending durable solutions.

174. In 1997, UNHCR plans to open an office in Chisinau, Moldova, to help and raise awareness of refugee issues within the government institutions concerned with migration issues. In addition UNHCR plans to establish a monitoring system for persons in need of international protection, within the migration transit flux affecting the country, and assessing the vulnerability of displaced persons from Transniestr and refugees waiting for a durable solution.

175. Following a cease-fire agreement signed in August 1996, presidential elections were held in Chechnya (Russian Federation) in December 1996. After the murder of six International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) international staff members that month, UNHCR assistance activities were stopped in the border areas for security reasons, but continued in the neighbouring areas through local implementing partners and within the limits imposed by the threats against aid workers. A consolidated inter-agency appeal for persons displaced as a result of the emergency situation in Chechnya (Russian Federation) was issued in April 1996 to cover the period 1 January to 31 December 1996. Another appeal was issued in February 1997 to cover the period up to December 1997, for a beneficiary population of 75,000 displaced persons from Chechnya (Russian Federation).

176. In the framework of the follow-up activities on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the CIS Conference, UNHCR will endeavour to enhance the capacity of the Federal and Regional Migration Service to address the problem of population displacement in the Russian Federation. This assistance will include support to registration procedures and databases, training activities, intergovernmental exchanges and sharing of information, the provision of basic material resources and consultancies. Particular attention will be given to the implementation of efficient and fair asylum and refugee status determination procedures by the federal and regional authorities.

177. Since Turkey maintains the geographical limitation on the application of the 1951 Convention, refugee status determination under UNHCR's mandate remains a main focus of UNHCR activities in the country, particularly for Iranian and Iraqi asylum-seekers. In addition, UNHCR is providing assistance to some 2,500 Bosnian refugees pending their repatriation.

5. Former Yugoslavia Operations

178. The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed in November 1995, recognized the importance of lasting solutions for more than 2 million refugees and displaced persons and entrusted UNHCR with the task of formulating a plan for a repatriation operation. In 1996 and the first quarter of 1997, UNHCR has, therefore, focused its efforts on the promotion and identification of durable solutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, by extension, on neighbouring Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

179. At the beginning of 1996, the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal requested international assistance for refugees and IDPs, who totalled

some 3.1 million persons. In the course of the same year it was estimated that 250,000 refugees and displaced persons returned home to Bosnia and Herzegovina. A further 80,000 civilians, however, were displaced following the transfer of territorial authority. Of a total of 1.2 million refugees who currently remain outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, principally in Western Europe, it is estimated that an additional 200,000 could return in 1997. In addition, up to 50,000 IDPs could return home. The Republic of Croatia continues to host 160,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 198,000 IDPs. In Eastern Slavonia, UNHCR is working closely with the Croatian Government and the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) to maintain stability and prevent a further outflow of the population. In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, there are more than 560,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, of whom a sizeable number are expected to require local settlement assistance. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Slovenia, there are 5,000 and 14,000 refugees respectively. In the first quarter of 1997, UNHCR's planning estimate for assistance activities in the region was for some 1.9 million persons.

180. UNHCR's principal objectives include the facilitation of durable solutions in the context of the next two year Consolidation Period until the end of 1998. In addition to repatriation and return, which includes assistance to IDPs, other options include local settlement of refugees and a limited resettlement programme. Traditional care and maintenance activities will therefore be phased down over the period 1997 through 1998.

181. UNHCR's programme in 1996 in Bosnia and Herzegovina was designed to foster significant early return movements. There were, however, serious political obstacles preventing this, particularly due to the lack of freedom of movement and security problems, in addition to continuing housing shortages and significant unemployment. UNHCR, nevertheless, strongly emphasized the need for progress in the creation of possibilities for the return of the very large number of refugees and displaced persons who have to return to areas where they would now constitute an ethnic minority. Among the main confidence-building initiatives were an increasing number of inter-entity bus lines and the promotion of visits to home towns of displaced persons. While the bus lines have been a success, with around 4,000 persons using them every week by the end of 1996, the visits have, in the majority of cases, been met with stiff resistance from the authorities. Several pilot return projects, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, have equally been continuously obstructed, in spite of prior agreements.

182. Furthermore, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 22 target areas were also identified where the infrastructual capacity could be expanded to receive returnees. The largest component of the assistance programme was that of shelter, whereby 17,113 houses, 187 collective centres, 70 schools and 60 medical facilities were renovated in 1996, and 54,000 units received glazing. This programme will continue in 1997, as well as micro-credit management and other activities, including capacity building and projects to meet the special needs of women, the elderly and children.

183. The total 1996 financial obligation for the UNHCR Special Operation (Special Programmes) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Programme Delivery and Administrative

Support Costs in the region and at UNHCR Headquarters, was $ 261,665,317. The 1996 financial obligation under General Programmes for Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and a project for refugees of other nationalities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs, amounted to $ 5,016,895.68.

184. On the international level, UNHCR participated in, or organized, a number of meetings and conferences in 1996. Three meetings of the Humanitarian Issues Working Group (HIWG) of the Peace Implementation Council were convened in 1996, the last being held on 16 December 1996. On 20 March 1997, a Consultative Meeting on Planning for Repatriation to Bosnia and Herzegovina was convened, followed on 21 March by a Fifth Regional Meeting of Refugee Ministers/Commissioners, with the participation of a number of host/donor States and relevant institutions. At the national level, UNHCR continues to participate in and chair, as appropriate, a number of Task Forces and Working Groups in close coordination with the High Representative, the Stabilazation Force (Bosnia and Herzegovenia) (NATO) (SFOR), United Nations agencies, international financial and development institutions, and NGOs.

H. Regional developments in Central Asia, South-West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (CASWANAME)

1. Central and South-West Asia Operations

185. The continuing fighting between factions and the change of authority in various regions of Afghanistan have affected the rate of repatriation of Afghan refugees. In 1996, some 120,000 Afghan refugees repatriated from Pakistan while less than 10,000 returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The remaining caseload in Pakistan is some 1.2 million persons. In the Islamic Republic of Iran the remaining caseload is approximately 1.4 million persons. UNHCR carried out its reintegration programme throughout Afghanistan to assist the local communities to receive returnees in a sustainable manner, mainly in the fields of education, health, drinking water, irrigation, agriculture, repairs of roads and bridges, income generation and credit.

186. In September 1996, the new authorities in Jalalabad and Kabul imposed regulations abolishing the employment of women and the education of girls. UNHCR programmes and rehabilitation activities in these cities have been disrupted, slowed down or closed, similarly to those of other United Nations agencies and NGOs. UNHCR is engaged in a dialogue with the authorities, who have promised to ease some regulations and to resume education programmes for girls.

187. At the end of 1996, fighting north of Kabul created the displacement of some 110,000 persons who took temporary shelter in the capital city. Fighting in the north-west province of Badghis has caused substantial displacement throughout the region, including some 27,000 persons who have relocated to camps and private accommodations in Herat city. UNHCR has responded to these emergency situations by providing expertise to the local authorities and relief to the displaced persons, in cooperation with other United Nations agencies and ICRC.

188. For its repatriation and reintegration operations in 1997, UNHCR has presented a request for $ 27.1 million in the United Nations consolidated appeal for Afghanistan. UNHCR has endorsed the conclusions of the International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan held in Ashgabat in January 1997.

189. The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to give asylum to the largest refugee population in the world. According to Government figures, approximately 1.4 million Afghan and 500,000 Iraqi refugees remain in the country.

190. The main development in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1996 was the influx of some 65,000 Iraqi refugees who arrived in the western part of the Islamic Republic of Iran after fighting broke out in the Sulemaniya area of Iraq in September and October 1996. By January 1997, practically all these refugees had returned to their places of origin. During their stay in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the basic shelter, food and health needs of these refugees were covered by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with UNHCR contributing over $ 4.2 million from its Emergency Fund.

191. UNHCR continues to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran through various health, education and income generating projects which address the needs of the refugees. UNHCR has introduced new assistance measures in the education sector to support the efforts of the Government to ensure that primary and secondary education continues to be extended to non-camp documented Afghan refugee children. In 1997 UNHCR is studying means to extend its support in the sector of education to non-camp Iraqi refugee children. UNHCR and its governmental partner intend to start a credit scheme project, with the technical assistance of the Grameen Trust.

192. The main development in Pakistan was the arrival of some 50,000 new Afghan refugees in the North West Frontier Province after Kabul came under Taliban control. UNHCR and WFP have directly assisted one third of this group with food, shelter, health care and proper sanitation in Nasir Bagh refugee village. In 1996, UNHCR and its implementing partners have continued to encourage refugee community participation in the organization and, when possible, payment of services in the water, health care and sanitation sectors. The Nutrition Surveillance System recommended by a joint WFP-UNHCR Food Assessment mission will be operational at the beginning of 1997.

193. The number of Afghan refugees who opt for repatriation to their home country shows a regular decrease since 1993. Although UNHCR continues to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Afghans to places in Afghanistan where peace and stability can guarantee a quick and durable reintegration, there is a need to envisage solutions other than repatriation to form part of a solution-oriented comprehensive approach.

194. UNHCR has offices in each of the five Central Asian republics of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. UNHCR's overall strategy in Central Asia is to enhance the capacity of Governments in the region to more effectively manage refugee and forced population movements and thereby contribute to the prevention of such population movements in future. This strategy and the objectives that follow from them are entirely consistent and compatible with the CIS Conference's Programme of Action. In

addition to this, UNHCR is actively engaged in promoting and facilitating voluntary repatriation to Tajikistan and in assisting needy and vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers, especially in the areas of health care, income generation and family support, throughout the region.

195. In October 1996 Kyrgyzstan acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, becoming the second Central Asian republic to do so after Tajikistan. It was also agreed that a Centre for Migration Management would be established in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to provide training and institutional support to the Migration Department which is responsible for dealing with refugee matters. In Kazakstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, UNHCR provided the Governments with advice and comments on draft legislation related to refugees and the establishment of national administrative structures and procedures to manage refugee protection and assistance matters. Various institutions, such as the Centre for Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Uzbekistan and the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights in Turkmenistan, were established with UNHCR support to serve as venues for courses, workshops and training in refugee law, international protection and status determination, as well as to promote study, research and writing on refugees and other human rights and humanitarian topics. In Tajikistan, the continued deterioration of the security situation in the country throughout 1996 culminated in a two week hostage crisis in February 1997, in which five United Nations of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) and four UNHCR staff were held captive along with six others, including a government minister. Unfortunately, in large part due to the on-going conflict, only 1,334 refugees repatriated voluntarily to Tajikistan in 1996. Progress in the inter-Tajik talks in the first quarter of 1997, however, may lead to more conducive political and security conditions in Tajikistan and serve as an encouragement for higher levels of voluntary repatriation later in the year.

2. North Africa and the Middle East Operations

196. The Report of the Secretary-General of 5 November 1996 on the situation in Western Sahara was submitted to the Security Council, which adopted resolution 1084, on 27 November 1996, extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for a further period of six months, until 31 May 1997.

197. While the work of the MINURSO has been suspended after a period of slow progress, UNHCR continues to monitor all developments in the region, and has undertaken to review and update the repatriation plan drawn up in 1991 to prepare for the voluntary repatriation of the refugees as foreseen in the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. Updates in logistical considerations have set the cost of UNHCR's repatriation plan at almost $ 50 million. A figure of 105,000 persons is contained in the UNHCR repatriation plan as an initial planning assumption. When conditions so permit, UNHCR plans to carry out a pre-registration of potential returnees, which is an essential part of the preparatory work for the repatriation operation.

198. Although a survey of water resources has been completed, a planned drilling programme around potential repatriation sites in the eastern part of the Territory has been put on hold to avoid a costly initial investment in the absence of a fixed date for the referendum. This postponement does not affect UNHCR's readiness.

199. UNHCR has conducted a series of missions to Algeria, Morocco, the Territory of Western Sahara, as well as the refugee camps in Tindouf area, has held discussions with the relevant authorities, and has received pledges of full co-operation and support from all its interlocutors. In consultation with MINURSO, UNHCR has also undertaken a number of efforts to complement those of MINURSO.

200. Pending the above, UNHCR is continuing its assistance programmes for the 80,000 vulnerable refugees in the four camps in the Tindouf area of Algeria, among a total refugee population estimated by the Algerian authorities to number 165,000 persons.

201. The Sahrawi refugee population in the Tindouf area is estimated by the Algerian authorities to number some 165,000 persons (105,000 adults and 60,000 children), a figure that has been used for statistical purposes in all UNHCR documentation since 1982. UNHCR assistance is provided to 80,000 vulnerable persons (women, children and the elderly) on the basis of a joint assessment carried out by UNHCR and WFP in 1987. The figure of 105,000 persons contained in the UNHCR repatriation plan referred to above, was adopted as an initial planning assumption by a UNHCR technical team which visited the camps in February 1995 to assess numbers who would need to be repatriated under the United Nations Settlement Plan. The estimate was based on the number of applications processed at that time by the Identification Commission (IDC) of MINSURO and multiplied by an average family size of 3.5 persons. The actual figure to be repatriated will need to be revised in terms of further IDC interviews and the real size of individual families.

202. In the course of a mission undertaken to Algeria by the Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau in June 1996, the question of statistics was discussed with MINURSO in Tindouf, as well as with camp officials, refugees and the Red Crescent. On the basis of these discussions, food distribution reports and observation of the camp sites, the mission concluded that the figures of 80,000 vulnerable refugees in need of assistance and of 165,000 for statistical purposes do not require modification.

203. Since July 1996, the UNHCR Field Office in Tindouf has become operational, while staff from Algiers and from Headquarters regularly conduct missions to the Tindouf area. An international staff member has been appointed for Tindouf effective 15 February 1997.

204. During 1996, political instability in Northern Iraq continued to affect UNHCR's programs and operations. Factional fighting between the two main political parties in Northern Iraq, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), coupled with the intervention of outside powers, resulted in population movements both inside Iraq and to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The fighting between the KDP and the PUK resulted in the flight of an estimated 65,000 PUK supporters from northern Iraq to the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the aftermath of the PUK recapture of the town of Sulemaniya on 13 October 1996, most of those who had fled to the Islamic Republic of Iran returned to northern Iraq. UNHCR provided them, initially as refugees and later as returnees, with appropriate assistance to meet their needs.

205. In November 1996, UNHCR decided to construct a transit site at Muqibla (Dohuk Governorate) to stimulate and assist the voluntary repatriation of the Turkish refugees from Atroush camp and from urban areas in the Governorate. Efforts to resolve difficulties created by a group of activists in the camp, who prevented the refugees from freely expressing their will, continued to be a main concern in 1996. In this context, UNHCR announced on 21 December 1996 that it would phase out its assistance for Atroush. As of end April 1997, some 115 refugees have decided to voluntarily return to Turkey, while 4,311 other persons have left Atroush and are being accommodated in Dohuk Governorate. Another 6,439 persons left the camp and are seeking shelter in the Iraqi Government controlled area. UNHCR is following up with the Government of Iraq on the entry of the ex-Atroush refugees who wish to be accepted in the government controlled area.

206. During 1996, UNHCR continued to monitor and assist approximately 200 Palestinians who have been stranded at Salloum on the Egyptian-Libyan Arab Jamahiriya border since September 1995. The immediate needs of vulnerable cases in this population were addressed through the provision of basic relief items. It should be noted that after the decision of the authorities of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to readmit these persons, UNHCR is closely monitoring the situation.

CHAPTER IV

FINANCING OF MATERIAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

207. In 1996, UNHCR's final budget was $ 1.3 billion. Donors provided some $ 970 million, compared to total contributions of nearly $ 996 billion in 1995. The United States of America, Japan, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom maintained their excellent funding levels. The European Commission remained an important contributor to the Office. Donations from both private donors and non-governmental sources continued, but at somewhat reduced levels as compared to 1995.

208. As in the past, the funding of the 1996 General Programmes remained a top priority. These programmes are, by definition, core activities for refugees and provide the High Commissioner with the essential flexibility needed to deal with emergencies and voluntary repatriations. In 1996, the upward trend in the funding of General Programmes continued. As of 31 December 1996, the Office had received $ 351 million towards General Programmes, as compared with the previous year's figure of $ 335 million. Secondary income, in the form of the previous year's carry-over, cancellations of prior years' obligations, interest earnings and various transfers, allowed UNHCR to carry-over some $ 30 million into 1997. This carry-over helped cover expenditure in early 1997, in advance of confirmation by donors of $ 200 million announced at the Pledging Conference in New York in November 1996.

209. In 1996, special operations again amounted to some two thirds of UNHCR's operational activities. Appeals were launched, in conjunction with DHA, for operations in former Yugoslavia, the Afghan repatriation programme, the Great Lakes region emergency as well as programmes in the Horn of Africa and the Republics of the former Soviet Union. UNHCR issued its own appeals for Central America, the repatriations to Angola and Myanmar and for a number of other operations. The lack of contributions and the timing of pledges for operations in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa and in former Yugoslavia, were probably the Office's greatest challenges during 1996. These Programmes were, at times, short of finances, hampering operations in the field. During 1996, the Office raised some $ 618 million for special operations, repatriations and emergencies, in addition to the amount under General Programmes.

210. For 1997, UNHCR faces a sixth consecutive year with projected budgetary requirements well beyond 1.2 billion dollars. A 1997 General Programmes target of $ 452.6 million has been adopted, the largest ever. For Special Programmes, the Office requires some $ 740 million. Requirements for operations in the Great Lakes region and former Yugoslavia, as well as repatriation operations in Africa and Asia, remain urgent priorities, as do programmes in the CIS countries.

CHAPTER V

COORDINATION

A. Follow-up to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56

1. Intergovernmental discussions

211. During 1996, the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme devoted a part of each of its meetings to consideration of ECOSOC resolution 1995/56. In January, the Committee looked at measures undertaken by UNHCR in the field of emergency preparedness and response. In April, it focused on UNHCR's operations in countries of origin, including protection considerations, and looked at the need for linkages between relief, rehabilitation and longer-term development. In June, the focus was on UNHCR's activities in the field of prevention and capacity-building. A number of overarching issues were considered in September, including the question of coordination.

212. At its forty-seventh session in October 1996, the Executive Committee adopted a wide ranging conclusion on the basis of the deliberations in the Standing Committee (A/AC.96/878, para 24). That conclusion, inter alia, took stock of the mandate of UNHCR and of the different capacities developed by the Office in emergencies and solutions and recognized these as an important contribution to the overall response capacity of the United Nations system. It called on UNHCR to participate actively in Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) efforts to undertake systematic analysis of various models of coordination, with a view to ascertaining their comparative effectiveness in responding to different situations. It welcomed the conclusion of memoranda of understanding by UNHCR with sister agencies and urged the Office to continue to establish predictable operational relationships through such agreements. With regard to gaps in the response to humanitarian needs, it highlighted the need for a predictable division of labour in respect of IDPs. More generally, with a view to ensuring coherent response to emergencies, it emphasized the importance of joint contingency planning, needs assessments, and monitoring and evaluation. It also stressed that consolidated appeals should reflect priorities established through joint needs assessments, be coordinated with other resource mobilization mechanisms, and take account of the budgetary cycles of agencies and the regional dimensions of crises. The Executive Committee also called on UNHCR to participate actively in the IASC as the primary mechanism for inter-agency decisions on system-wide policy issues relating to humanitarian assistance, as well as in the elaboration of options and proposals to improve the functioning of the IASC and its Working Group. Moreover, it called on UNHCR and the IASC to work to develop predictable linkages between humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development, emphasizing the importance of ensuring the sustainability of reintegration as well as of withdrawal strategies.

2. The inter-agency process

213. In parallel with discussions in the Executive Committee, UNHCR has been actively involved in an intensive process of inter-agency consultations on follow-up to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56 within the framework of the IASC and its Working Group. The Standing Committee was kept regularly briefed on

progress made in inter-agency discussions as well as those in other intergovernmental fora by the Director of DHA, Geneva.

214. UNHCR is of the view that the inter-agency consultations conducted within the framework of the IASC and its Working Group of the follow up to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56 have made significant progress in a number of important areas. The Office has, however, expressed its reservations about recommendations made by the IASC in respect of a unitary field coordination model based on the Resident Coordinator system. UNHCR has advanced the view that the lead agency model should be retained, amongst the options available to the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) as a well tested and flexible formula for ensuing a coordinated response to complex emergencies. In the view of UNHCR, the lead agency approach has the advantage of avoiding multiple layers of coordination, minimizing cost and avoiding diffused accountability. It has the necessary flexibility to cover the cross-border and regional dimensions of complex emergencies, without introducing multi-tiered coordination arrangements which impede, rather than facilitate, the operational effectiveness of the agencies involved.

215. In addition, UNHCR has advanced the view that clearer terms of reference for the ERC, DHA and the IASC, as well as for the relationship between them, is required as an essential element of improved coordination.

B. Cooperation between UNHCR, other members of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations

216. UNHCR continued to develop linkages with other agencies of the United Nations system in 1996 by concluding or updating global Memoranda of Understanding (see para. 67 above). A local Memorandum of Understanding was also concluded with UNDP for Rwanda, defining joint activities in the continuum from humanitarian assistance to development.

217. UNHCR is also actively cooperating with regional and local development institutions world-wide. In this context, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which addresses regional humanitarian, social, economic and human rights issues.

218. In 1996 and the first quarter 1997, over 100 staff members of other United Nations bodies have participated in UNHCR training courses, with particular emphasis on People-Oriented Planning (POP) Training for gender-sensitive programme planning. Other courses included emergency management, food aid, refugee law and protection, status determination and returnee monitoring training.

C. Relations with non-governmental organizations

219. UNHCR's general activities with NGOs continued to focus on the Partnership in Action (PARinAC) process, the NGO/UNHCR Plan of Action and Recommendations drawn up in Oslo (6-9 June 1994), promoting closer cooperation and coordination in all aspects of UNHCRs work, in order to improve delivery of services to refugees and other populations of concern to UNHCR. In late 1996, UNHCR started a review of progress under PARinAC in order to assess achievements and to identify outstanding priorities, with

particular attention being paid to the relationship with national and indigenous NGOs.

220. At the CIS Conference in May 1996, a total of 136 NGOs were accredited to the Conference. In the follow-up to the Conference, NGO involvement in the implementation of Conference decisions is a key priority for UNHCR, which has established mechanisms for the enhancement of NGO involvement at the national, regional and international levels.

221. During 1996, UNHCR concluded 974 sub-agreements with NGOs in 128 countries, for operational activities with refugee and other populations of concern to UNHCR. Of these, 321 national NGOs implemented 606 projects, and 121 international NGOs implemented 368 projects.

222. During 1996, over 6,370 NGO staff members world-wide, benefited from UNHCR sponsored and/or conducted training, the majority of which was protection training in Europe, followed by protection/refugee law training elsewhere. Other areas covered included training on POP, programme management, emergency management, as well as resettlement and various types of technical workshops.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN 1996 BY REGIONAL BUREAU/COUNTRY AND MAIN TYPES OF ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

(All sources of funds - in thousands of US dollars)

Regional Bureau/Country or Area	Type of Assistance						Total
	Emergency Assistance	Care and Maintenance	Voluntary a/ Repatriation	Local Settlement	Resettlement	Admin. Support	
1. AFRICA*/							
Angola			13,415.7	150.0		442.7	14,008.4
Benin		1,614.0	1,000.0	49.7		199.7	2,863.4
Burundi	4,356.6	6,204.4	1,025.7	32.5		396.7	12,015.9
Central African Republic		3,275.6	267.6	208.1		51.7	3,803.0
Cote d'Ivoire		8,665.1	20.0	3,461.2		524.0	12,670.3
Djibouti		2,031.5	758.9			305.1	3,095.5
Eritrea		717.2	5,563.7			261.8	6,542.7
Ethiopia		8,283.9	12,717.1	4,005.5		1,125.0	26,131.5
Ghana	1,001.8	2,346.0	2,622.5	63.1		269.7	6,303.1
Guinea		23,280.0	20.0	85.9		467.3	23,853.2
Kenya	556.1	16,695.2	3,206.7	639.2	392.3	2,156.9	23,646.4
Liberia		1,825.7	1,367.2	35.9		241.4	3,470.2
Malawi		2,103.4				84.1	2,187.5
Mozambique		361.5	7,798.3			922.4	9,082.2
Rwanda	16,319.9	642.0	47,696.1			1,010.1	65,668.1
Senegal		1,545.3	161.4	1,738.2		655.8	4,100.7
Sierra Leone	287.0	1,404.3	305.0	61.1		50.4	2,107.8
Somalia (North-West Somalia)		196.0	2,823.1				3,019.1
Sudan		4,796.3	2,931.7	6,235.5	68.6	995.6	15,027.7
Uganda	273.7	3,224.9		23,730.4		665.9	27,894.9
United Rep of Tanzania	16,525.2	37,063.0	5,669.2	218.3		900.3	60,376.0
Zaire	18,001.6	69,800.4	3,885.5	3,456.7		582.6	95,726.8
Zambia		1,497.7	1,168.4	534.7		372.6	3,573.4
Zimbabwe		1,001.2				53.9	1,055.1
Southern Africa		2,445.3	1,596.5	613.6		694.9	5,350.3
West Africa		5,773.5	12,023.5	1,619.1	24.0	473.4	19,913.5
Other countries in Africa		18,937.8	762.2	1,074.3		96.6	20,870.9
Sub-total (1)	**57,321.9**	**225,731.2**	**128,806.0**	**48,013.0**	**484.9**	**14,000.6**	**474,357.6**
2. ASIA AND OCEANIA							
Bangladesh		3,654.2	1,113.6			404.2	5,172.0
China	25.0	338.3		2,522.1		189.5	3,074.9
Hong Kong		9,221.4	2,187.0		145.1	401.3	11,954.8
Nepal		5,637.7		529.6		229.3	6,396.6
Philippines		1,006.3	1,237.9		182.5	133.9	2,560.6
Thailand		6,660.1	203.2		242.0	760.0	7,865.3
Viet Nam		1,481.5		11,989.0		176.3	13,646.8
Other countries in Asia		8,567.3	19,045.9	2,579.5		1,933.0	32,125.7
Australia and New Zealand		948.8		34.9		148.6	1,132.3
Sub-total (2)	**25.0**	**37,515.6**	**23,787.6**	**17,655.1**	**569.6**	**4,376.1**	**83,929.0**

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN 1996 BY REGIONAL BUREAU/COUNTRY AND MAIN TYPES OF ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

(All sources of funds - in thousands of US dollars)

Regional Bureau/Country or Area	Type of Assistance						Total
	Emergency Assistance	Care and Maintenance	Voluntary a/ Repatriation	Local Settlement	Resettlement	Admin. Support	
3. EUROPE							
Armenia		4,279.1		1,357.5		228.2	5,864.8
Austria		684.8		1,248.3		95.7	2,028.8
Azerbaijan				5,912.1		273.5	6,185.6
France			43.0	2,438.6		199.0	2,680.6
Georgia		5,868.0				355.9	6,223.9
Germany		187.0		2,409.3		91.3	2,687.6
Greece		1,870.3				93.8	1,964.1
Hungary		1,883.7		473.9		73.3	2,430.9
Italy		484.7		2,290.3		319.1	3,094.1
Russian Federation	4,784.9	8,570.9	171.7			642.8	14,170.3
Spain				1,122.6		167.5	1,290.1
Turkey		4,167.7			459.2	379.4	5,006.3
United Kingdom			65.0	1,501.5		102.2	1,668.7
Former Yugoslavia		242,592.7	93.9	3,521.6	765.5	4,844.7	251,818.4
Central countries		3,578.5		1,278.3		191.8	5,048.6
CIS countries		1,996.3				126.0	2,122.3
Northern & Baltic countries		739.4		1,169.2		67.0	1,975.6
Western countries		649.6		3,164.9		189.0	4,003.5
Sub-total (3)	**4,784.9**	**277,552.7**	**373.6**	**27,888.1**	**1,224.7**	**8,440.2**	**320,264.2**
4. AMERICAS							
Canada				1,006.0		60.8	1,066.8
Guatemala			4,100.0	1,858.3		648.0	6,606.3
Mexico		2,905.9	1,316.7	5,058.2		522.3	9,803.1
United States of America				2,842.0		153.2	2,995.2
Northern South American countries		1,606.3	125.1	542.1		371.0	2,644.5
Central American countries			336.6	3,720.3		335.6	4,392.5
Southern South American countries		2,344.6	310.0	2,073.7		402.9	5,131.2
Sub-total (4)	**0.0**	**6,856.8**	**6,188.4**	**17,100.6**	**0.0**	**2,493.8**	**32,639.6**
5. CENTRAL ASIA, SOUTH WEST ASIA NORTH AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST							
Afghanistan			10,177.0	485.0		210.5	10,872.5
Algeria		5,555.6	652.7			91.0	6,299.3
Cyprus		9,415.8				90.3	9,506.1
Egypt		2,225.1		1,445.7	20.6	262.7	3,954.1
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	4,319.3	1,931.4	3,248.2	10,722.6		480.7	20,702.2
Iraq	888.1	1,239.1	2,220.0		2,360.4	420.7	7,128.3
Mauritania		3,637.5	1,066.2			260.9	4,964.6
Pakistan		12,542.3	3,843.6			923.1	17,309.0
Yemen		1,583.7	190.7	1,039.1		111.3	2,924.8
Central Asian Republics		4,006.6	372.3	285.6		277.2	4,941.7
Other countries in North Africa		1,964.5	230.8			117.0	2,312.3
Other countries in Western Asia	100.0	6,516.5	86.2	349.3	46.1	322.1	7,420.2
Sub-total (5)	**5,307.4**	**50,618.1**	**22,087.7**	**14,327.3**	**2,427.1**	**3,567.5**	**98,335.1**

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN 1996 BY REGIONAL BUREAU/COUNTRY AND MAIN TYPES OF ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

(All sources of funds - in thousands of US dollars)

Regional Bureau/Country or Area	Type of Assistance						Total
	Emergency Assistance	Care and Maintenance	Voluntary a/ Repatriation	Local Settlement	Resettlement	Admin. Support	
6. OTHER PROGRAMMES & HEADQUARTERS							
Global and regional projects	**10,187.5**	**48,341.0**	**14,783.1**	**11,860.0**	**1,062.5**	**50,196.8**	**134,430.9**
TOTAL (1-6)	**77,626.7**	**644,615.4**	**196,026.4**	**136,844.1**	**5,768.8**	**83,075.0**	**1,143,956.4**
of which : General Programme	22,056.1	243,193.8	23,421.5	94,841.5	5,002.9	34,971.2	423,487.0
Special Programmes	55,570.6	401,421.6	172,604.9	42,002.6	765.9	48,103.8	720,469.4
UN Regular Budget						25,303.6	25,303.6

a/ including assistance to returnees in countries of origin

b/ including expenditure for the Fund for International Field Staff Housing and basic amenities.

*/ excluding North Africa which is included in 5 : Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

CONTRIBUTION TO UNHCR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

(IN UNITED STATES DOLLARS)

SITUATION AS AT 31 MARCH 1997

1996				1997		
GENERAL PROGRAMMES	SPECIAL PROGRAMMES	TOTAL 1996	DONOR	TOTAL 1997	GENERAL PROGRAMMES	SPECIAL PROGRAMMES
			A. GOVERNMENTS			
			Algeria	50,000	50,000	
50,000		50,000	Argentina			
10,150,376	2,384,788	12,535,164	Australia	11,477,645	10,714,286	763,359
423,871	631,317	1,055,188	Austria	496,543	412,844	83,699
1,800		1,800	Bahamas			
2,465,325	5,417,084	7,882,409	Belgium	3,187,500	1,625,000	1,562,500
			Benin	1,500	1,500	
	1,923	1,923	Cambodia			
11,146,188	6,705,922	17,852,110	Canada	3,308,823		3,308,823
20,000		20,000	Chile	20,000	20,000	
250,000		250,000	China	250,000	250,000	
17,321		17,321	Colombia	19,275	19,275	
12,676		12,676	Costa Rica			
7,083	2,000	9,083	Cyprus	11,054	6,054	5,000
	586,245	586,245	Czech Republic			
22,095,427	33,598,707	55,694,134	Denmark	352,966		352,966
1,000		1,000	Djibouti	1,000	1,000	
5,850		5,850	Egypt			
7,148,509	7,337,657	14,486,166	Finland			
6,049,634	6,698,383	12,748,017	France	1,238,095		1,238,095
6,828,243	15,169,852	21,998,095	Germany	13,810,392	6,198,372	7,612,020
5000		5000	Ghana	5,000	5,000	
300,000	10,000	310,000	Greece			
10,000		10,000	Holy See			
			Hungary	20,000	20,000	
200,000		200,000	Iceland	66,964	66,964	
24,000	20,925	44,925	Indonesia	4,000	4,000	

CONTRIBUTION TO UNHCR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

(IN UNITED STATES DOLLARS)

SITUATION AS AT 31 MARCH 1997

1996			DONOR	1997		
GENERAL PROGRAMMES	SPECIAL PROGRAMMES	TOTAL 1996		TOTAL 1997	GENERAL PROGRAMMES	SPECIAL PROGRAMMES
1,739,050	2,119,262	3,858,312	Ireland	58,626		58,626
50,000		50,000	Israel			
7,920,792	5,408,285	13,329,077	Italy	7,185,629	7,185,629	
29,151,100	101,797,682	130,948,782	Japan	33,389,077	350,000	33,039,077
			Lebanon	3,000	3,000	
40,000	54,961	94,961	Liechtenstein	37,037	37,037	
416,126	1,040,972	1,457,098	Luxembourg			
20,000		20,000	Malaysia			
1,954		1,954	Malta			
50,000	150,000	200,000	Mexico			
7,986		7,986	Monaco	7,042	7,042	
15,000		15,000	Morocco	15,000	15,000	
27,386,562	27,246,987	54,633,549	Netherlands	27,978,214	26,285,714	1,692,500
718,658	138,850	857,508	New Zealand	1,034,668	864,600	170,068
23,261,598	14,795,070	38,056,668	Norway	27,255,690	22,629,583	4,626,107
1,000		1,000	Philippines	4,000	3,000	1,000
150,000	96,770	246,770	Portugal	157,500	157,500	
700,000	103,824	803,824	Republic of Korea	1,500,000	1,500,000	
10,000		10,000	Saudi Arabia			
	309,783	309,783	South Africa			
2,326,254	5,010,743	7,336,997	Spain			
5,000		5,000	Sri Lanka	5,185	5,185	
39,940,003	32,125,774	72,065,777	Sweden	36,245,335	36,171,761	73,574
11,142,065	12,149,240	23,291,305	Switzerland	10,771,547	9,629,630	1,141,917
15,000		15,000	Thailand			
5,171	35310	40,481	Tunisia			
150,000		150,000	Turkey	150,000	150,000	
100,000		100,000	United Arab Emirates			
24,690,770	29,241,042	53,931,812	United Kingdom	14,016,736	8,064,516	5,952,220

CONTRIBUTION TO UNHCR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

(IN UNITED STATES DOLLARS)

SITUATION AS AT 31 MARCH 1997

1996			DONOR	1997		
GENERAL PROGRAMMES	SPECIAL PROGRAMMES	TOTAL 1996		TOTAL 1997	GENERAL PROGRAMMES	SPECIAL PROGRAMMES
98,400,000	163,756,912	262,156,912	United States of America	144,120,000	90,000,000	54,120,000
11,618		11,618	Venezuela			
335,638,010	**474,146,270**	**809,784,280**	**TOTAL (Governments)**	**338,255,043**	**222,453,492**	**115,801,551**
			B. EUROPEAN COMMISSION			
12,582,538	**134,799,042**	**147,381,580**	**TOTAL**	**65,908,089**		**65,908,089**
			C. UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM			
38,452	**300,446**	**338,898**	**TOTAL**			
			D. NGOs AND OTHER			
2,297,855	**10,058,384**	**12,356,239**	**TOTAL**	**755,857**	**180,589**	**575,268**
350,556,855	**619,304,142**	**969,860,997**	**GRAND TOTAL**	**404,918,989**	**222,634,081**	**182,284,908**